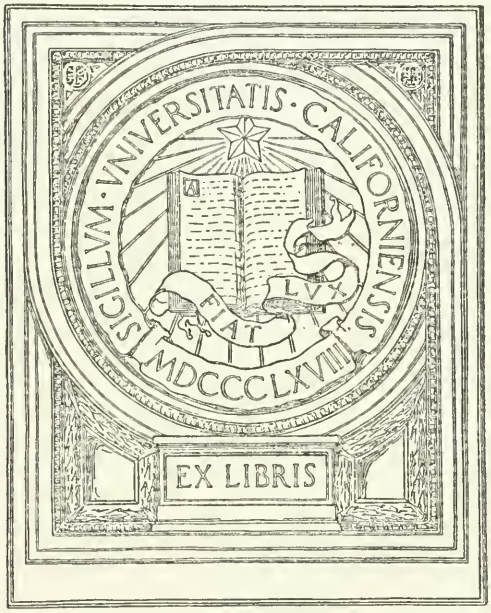

THE ART OF POETRY

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by

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THE ART OF POETRY

I WISH I could say how deeply I feel what I owe to the generous and sanguine friends who have elected me to this most honourable Chair. It would be less difficult to find words for the danger of the task; this is the Siege Perilous. But I will not attempt to say in full what I think and feel most sincerely with regard to the honour you have done me; as for the hazards of the place, they must be manifest to every one who has spent any time at all in thinking of the Art of Poetry. But you will allow me to say as much as this, that I find the greatest encouragement and the best auspices in those who have held this Chair before me; and I ask leave in this place to thank Mr. Bradley, Mr. Mackail, and the President of Magdalen for their good wishes.

DRUMMOND of Hawthornden, writing his sentiments about a new fashion in poetry which displeased him, begins with some old-fashioned sentences which may afford a text here; in a letter addressed 'to his much-honoured friend M. A. J., Physician to the King'. His friend is the poet Arthur Johnston, 'who holds among the Latin poets of Scotland the next place to the

elegant Buchanan'. Drummond is writing to a man of the highest principles, as follows:

'It is more praiseworthy in noble and excellent things to know something, though little, than in mean and ignoble matters to have a perfect knowledge. Amongst all those rare ornaments of the mind of Man *Poesie* hath had a most eminent place and been in high esteem, not only at one time, and in one climate, but during all times and through those parts of the world where any ray of humanity and civility hath shined. So that she hath not unworthily deserved the name of the Mistress of human life, the height of eloquence, the quintessence of knowledge, the loud trumpet of Fame, the language of the Gods. There is not anything endureth longer: Homer's Troy hath outlived many Republics, and both the Roman and Grecian Monarchies; she subsisteth by herself, and after one demeanour and continuance her beauty appeareth to all ages. In vain have some men of late (transformers of everything) consulted upon her reformation, and endeavoured to abstract her to metaphysical ideas and scholastical quiddities, denuding her of her own habits, and those ornaments with which she hath amused the world some thousand years. *Poesie* is not a thing that is in the finding and search, or which may be otherwise found out, being already condescended upon by all nations, and as it were established *iure gentium* amongst Greeks, Romans, Italians, French, Spaniards. Neither do I think that a good piece of *Poesie* which Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Petrarch,

Bartas, Ronsard, Boscan, Garcilasso (if they were alive and had that language) could not understand, and reach the sense of the writer.'

If they had that language! Here is the difficulty, so obvious that it escapes notice in many panegyrics of the Muses. In the other arts there is nothing like the curse of Babel; but the divine Idea of Poetry, abiding the same with itself in essence, shining with the same light, as Drummond sees it, in Homer and Virgil, Ronsard and Garcilaso de la Vega, is actually seen by very few votaries in each and all of those several lamps. The light of Poetry may be all over the world and belong to the whole human race, yet how little of it is really available, compared with the other arts! It is broken up among the various languages, and in such a way that not even time and study can always be trusted to find the true idea of Poetry. It is not merely that you are required to spend on the tongues the time that might be given to bear-baiting (as Sir Andrew discovered, ancestor of so many old gentlemen whose education has been neglected, so many seekers of culture), but even when you have mastered the grammar and dictionary you may find in the foreign poets insuperable difficulties of thought and sentiment. For poetic melody is not the same thing as music; it is much more deeply idiomatic and national. French is better understood in this country, more widely read than any foreign language; yet even the poets

in this country, some of them, have spoken dismal things in disparagement of French poetry. It is no uncommon thing for ingenuous youth, lovers of poetry in England, to be made unhappy by the difficulty and strangeness, as it seems to them, of French verse. Mr. John Bailey and Mr. Eccles have helped them, and you remember how our friend, M. Émile Legouis, came here nine years ago and dealt faithfully with the English poets and critics who boasted of their deafness. They were refuted and confounded, their injustice exposed with logical wit, their grudging objections overborne simply by the advocate's voice, as he read the songs of Musset's *Fortunio* and Victor Hugo's *Fantine*.[1]

But the difficulties remain, and English readers have to be taught that the French Alexandrine is neither 'our four-footed verse of the triple cadence' nor yet what the Northern languages made of it in the seventeenth century, High Dutch or Low Dutch, and Danish; and Drayton in *Polyolbion*:

> Through the Dorsetian fields that lie in open view
> My progress I again must seriously pursue.

The peculiar idiom of the French tongue is diffused through all French poetry, and if this makes it hard for us, what becomes of the uni-

[1] *Défense de la poésie française, à l'usage des lecteurs anglais.* (Constable, 1912.)

versal pattern which Drummond holds up as the same for all nations—'like the Ancients, and conform to those rules which hath been agreed unto by all times'? What is the use of all times agreeing, if each nation hears nothing but its own tune?

On the other hand, Drummond's worship of the Muses is not to be dismissed as fashionable rhetoric or conventional idealism. He knew what he was talking about, and he is thinking naturally of his own well-studied verse, his own share in the service of true poetry, along with Petrarch, Ronsard, Boscan, and Garcilaso. The names are not chosen at random, they are not there for ornament, like historical allusions of the popular preacher gabbling 'Socrates, Buddha, and Emerson', or like the formula of 'Goethe, Kant, and Beethoven', that used to pester us in the enlightened journalism of the War. When Drummond names Petrarch, Bartas, Ronsard, Boscan, and Garcilaso, he means the poets whom he knows and follows; more particularly in the Italian and Spanish names he means an art of poetry which he has made his own. For Drummond of Hawthornden belongs, like Spenser and Milton, to the great tradition of the Renaissance in modern poetry, the most comprehensive and vitally effective school of poetry in Christendom after the mediaeval fashion of Provence which it succeeds and continues. Drummond knows that he belongs to the great company of artists in

poetry who get their instruction from Italy, and he is right: his sonnets and madrigals are part of that Italian school which transformed the poetry of France and England, Portugal and Spain; which gave to England the music of Spenser's *Epithalamion* and of *Lycidas*. The difficulties of the curse of Babel are not abolished; but it is matter of historical fact that Italian poetry got over those obstacles in the sixteenth century; in some places even earlier. The Italian measures and modes of thought are adopted in other countries. Garcilaso and Camoens are Italian poets writing Castilian and Portuguese. Their names are found together in that pretty scene near the end of *Don Quixote*; the shepherdesses who took Don Quixote out of their silken fowling-nets were going to act eclogues of Garcilaso and Camoens. Drummond's madrigals, Milton's verses *On Time*, are pure Italian form. The poets of that tradition or school, or whatever it may be called, are not talking wildly, they are not hypocrites, if they speak as Drummond does of Poetry and say 'she subsisteth by herself, and after one demeanour and continuance her beauty appeareth to all ages'. At any rate they have proved in their own practice that they agree in different languages, drawing the same pattern, following the same rules of thought and melody.

With this reality in their mind they are justified to themselves in arguing that Poetry has not to be invented anew and is not to be trifled with.

Drummond in his respect for authority is quite different from the mere critics who preach up the Ancients. Any one can do that. We know their dramatic unities, and their receipts to make an epic poem. But the poet who belongs to a great tradition of art, transcending local barriers of language, is in a different case altogether. Even though he may not be, as Drummond was not himself, one of the great masters, and though the forms of his poetry be no more varied than those of Petrarch, still he has the reality of his own poems. The merely intellectual scheme of the critic turns to reality in the practical reason of the poet. His poetic life is larger than himself, and it is real life. Abstract and ideal in one way, no doubt, if you think of a bodiless Petrarchian form, identical in all the imitators of Petrarch. But the empty abstract Italian form of verse, the unbodied ghost of sonnets and *canzoni*, is itself real and a source of life :

> Small at first, and weak and frail
> Like the vapour of the vale :

but 'thoughts sprang where'er that step did fall', in the dance of the Italian syllables. The life of the poet is real in the poems he composes; through them he knows where he is; his praise of universal poetry is what he has made true for himself in the moments of his life, which he shares somehow with Petrarch and the other poets. Drummond has not had as good fortune

as they, though before we leave him let us remember that Charles Lamb has put Drummond among the best-loved names. Drummond is in the great tradition, and this is what he makes of it:

Rouse Memnon's mother from her Tython's bed,
That she thy carrier may with roses spread,
The nightingales thy coming each where sing,
Make an eternal spring,
Give life to this dark world which lieth dead.

And again:

This world is made a hell
Depriv'd of all that in it did excel;
O Pan, Pan, winter is fallen in our May,
Turn'd is in night our day.

It is the tune of Petrarch, Garcilaso, and Camoens, of the prevalent Italian school. It is poetry, as the art of poetry was understood for two or three centuries, in Italy and wherever the Italian poets found an audience.

What is there in it? When one looks into it to find the common element, to abstract the quintessence of the Italian school, is there anything more important than their favourite form of verse? Namely, that harmony of their longer and shorter lines which Dante explained in his essay on the principles of Italian poetry—the harmony of our ten-syllable and six-syllable line, which in Italian is eleven and seven. Of which Dante says (with strange enthusiasm over a very simple metrical formula, you will think):

'The most noble verse, which is the hendecasyllable, if it be accompanied with the verse of seven, yet so as still to keep the preeminence, will be found exulting higher still in light and glory.'

Et licet hoc (i.e. endecasyllabum) quod dictum est celeberrimum carmen ut dignum est videatur omnium aliorum, si eptasyllabi aliqualem societatem assumat, dummodo principatum obtineat, clarius magisque sursum superbire videtur; sed hoc ulterius elucidandum remaneat.

Whatever else there may be in the Art of Poetry, there is this mysterious power of certain formulas, abstract relations of syllables; of all these frames of verse in modern poetry there is none of greater dignity and at the same time more widely spread, more generally understood than this measure of the Italian *Canzone.* A bodiless thing; in itself you would say as abstract as a geometrical diagram and of not much more worth for poetry. Yet read the great lyrical poems of Spenser and Milton, read the *Ode to a Nightingale, The Scholar Gipsy, Thyrsis,* and you will hear how the abstract harmony takes possession of the minds of poets, and compels their thought and imagination to move in the same measure. The noblest thoughts have gone to this tune:

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world nor in broad rumour lies.

Our own poet of *Thyrsis* makes a contrast between his world, the Cumnor hills, the Wytham flats, the upper river, and the Sicilian fields of the old pastoral poetry:

When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine.

Yet his Oxford verse is derived from Italy, from the poetry that began at the court of the Norman kings in Sicily: 'Flowers first open'd on Sicilian air'.

In Drummond's praise of poetry we can detect two modes of thought, equally true but not equally effective. One is regard for the Ancients, which we can all share as readers of poetry. The other mode is adherence to a certain noble tradition of verse which is a living influence much nearer to the mind of the artist. Looking at Homer and Virgil, he is in a theatre along with innumerable other spectators. But at the sound of Petrarch's verse, he leaves the benches and takes his place in the orchestra. The infinite riches of Homer and Virgil he appreciates as a man of taste and a scholar; but the simple Italian metrical formula —11 : 7— makes a poet of him.

I have long thought of writing a book on the measures of modern poetry, from about the year 1100, when it begins in Provence. Whether it would do for lectures, I am not sure. It might possibly be useful if not entertaining. You will allow me a quotation, which I hope is not impertinent; a passage from the life of Dr. William

Crowe, of New College, who was Public Orator a hundred years ago; a poet of whom Wordsworth thought well, and the author of a treatise on versification. 'Writing to Rogers in February, 1827, to ask him to negotiate with Murray for the issue of a new edition of his poems, in which he wished to include a treatise on English versification, Crowe says:

'If he is willing to undertake the publishing I will immediately furnish more particulars and also submit the copy to your inspection. If the part on versification could be out before the middle of April it would find a present sale in Oxford, for this reason: there are above four score young poets who start every year for the English prize, and as I am one of the five judges to decide it they would (many of them) buy a copy to know my doctrine on the subject. The compositions are delivered in about the beginning of May.'[1]

My treatise will, I think, bring out some curious things, not generally known, of the same sort as the well ascertained and widespread influence of the Italian *Canzone* on the solemn odes of many languages. The same magical life of the spirit of verse is found everywhere. The best in this kind are echoes, and they travel over prodigious distances. My story will begin with the Venerable Bede, the first Englishman to write on prosody. Ages before the English took to the measures of modern verse Bede explained in Latin how it

[1] Clayden, *Rogers and his Contemporaries*, ii. 29.

would be done. He shows the difference between learned and popular, metrical and rhythmical verse; how without respect for quantity the measure of strict verse may be imitated, and how the rustic licence of popular poets may be used by artists in poetry. He gives the rule (e. g.) of the trochaic tetrameter; trochaic and tetrameter still, he reckons it, even when the rules of metrical quantity are neglected:

Apparebit repentina dies magna Domini.

A thousand years later the tune of it takes the mind of Dr. Johnson, and he sings:

Long-expected one and twenty,
Ling'ring year, at length is flown:
Pride and pleasure, pomp and plenty,
Great *Sir John*, are now your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind and light as feather,
Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

It appears first in modern poetry in William of Poitiers. His authorship of Burns's favourite stanza is well known. He also uses this, the verse of *a Toccata of Galuppi*, combined with the verse of *Love among the Ruins*.

When Captain Scott Moncrieff the other day translated the *Song of Roland* in the verse of the original, he found the measure recognized as that of the old Scottish version of the 124th Psalm:

Now Israel may say and that truly
If that the LORD had not our cause maintained.

The reason is that the Scottish poet was translating from the French Psalter of Marot and Beza; he wanted the French tune for his congregation of 'Gude and godlie ballads', and of course he had to keep the measure with the sharp pause at the fourth syllable, just as in *Roland*:

Halt sunt li pui e tenebrus e grant

and

En Rencesvals mult grant est la dulur.

For a thousand years in Christendom the Art of Poetry has lived on the old forms of rhythmical verse, derived, some of them obviously, others otherwise, from the metres of Greek and Latin, with the help of musical tunes.

Now this seems to bring out a considerable difference between the art of poetry and the other arts, at any rate in modern times. We talk of schools of poetry; but the beginners in poetry do not work through their apprenticeship in schools of art and offices like students of painting, music, and architecture. They are not taught; they have much to learn, but they learn it in their own way; the rudiments are easily acquired. Even a momentous discovery like that of which Dante speaks, the Italian harmony, as I have called it, is a trivial thing in appearance; it has been the life of very glorious poems, but there is nothing in it that needs to be explained to a working poet.

Is it true, or not, that the great triumphs of poetical art often come suddenly? Art like that of Pindar would seem to be impossible without

long preparation; but the Drama in Athens, England, and Spain, does it not seem to come very suddenly by its own, and attain its full proportions almost at once when once it has begun? The speed of the victory in England has been rather obscured for the popular mind through the conspiracy of Shakespeare's friends and admirers to praise him in the wrong way for native uncorrected genius, not at all for art. Yet is there anything more amazing in Shakespeare's life than his security in command of theatrical form? One of the first things he does, when he has a little leisure, is to invent the comedy of idle good manners in *Love's Labour's Lost*; in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he raises and completes the finest and most varied structure of poetical comedy: where did he learn it all? There had been nothing on earth like it; what had Plautus or Terence to contribute to that entertainment of Theseus and Hippolyta? Did Shakespeare get anything from classical comedy except the *Errors* and that fardel of baby things which proves the parentage of Perdita? That eternal bag of evidences—πηρίδιον γνωρισμάτων—it was a disappointment lately to observe that Menander could not leave it behind him when he was brought up from underground in Egypt. Shakespeare and Molière (in *Scapin*) have no scruples about the bundle of tokens at the end of the play, identifying the female infant. Yet to wait centuries for Menander in the original Greek, and then to find him dwelling with zest

on this old fardel—it did not add to the gaiety of nations. Shakespeare did not need this misadventure of Menander to bring out the contrast. Where did he learn his incomparable art?

On the other hand, there may be convention and long tradition leading to a sudden stroke of genius. Two of the most original of English poets, Chaucer and Burns, are the most indebted to their poetical ancestors. Burns has been injured in the same way as Shakespeare, by the wrong sort of admiration. Unlike Shakespeare, he began this himself, with the voluntary humility of his Edinburgh dedication to the Caledonian Hunt: 'I tuned my wild artless notes as she inspired'. 'She' is 'the Poetic Genius of my country'. But the Muse of Scotland had established for Burns a convention and tradition full of art; his book is the result of two or three generations of poetical schooling, and 'wild artless notes' are as unlike the perfect style of Burns as the sentiment of his preface generally is unlike the ironical vision of the *Holy Fair*.

The Art of Poetry is much more free than the other arts, in the sense that the right men do not need such steady training. Perhaps it is easier for the right men to work miracles, such as Burns did, in bringing the appearance of novelty and freshness out of old fashions. Also the essence of poetry is such that often much smaller things, comparatively, tell for success than in painting or music. Eight lines beginning 'A slumber did

my spirit seal ' may be larger in imagination than earth's diurnal course. Eight lines lately addressed to a mercenary army were enough to tell how the sum of things was saved :

Their shoulders held the sky suspended,
They stood, and earth's foundations stay.

Often single lines and phrases seem to have the value of whole poems. In the old English song ' Bitwene Mershe and Averill when spray ginneth to springe ' the opening words are everything ; though one is glad to have more. Herrick has put the whole meaning of the pilgrim's progress into two lines of his *Noble Numbers* :

I kenn my home, and it affords some ease
To see far off the smoaking villages.

Quoniam advena ego sum et peregrinus, sicut omnes patres mei. It is the English landscape too, as you come down the hill at the end of the day.

Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, is praised for his descriptions, particularly the Summer and Winter in two of his prologues. He is not often quoted for his great discovery in a line or two of the thirteenth prologue of *Eneados*, where he tells how he watched the midsummer midnight in the North, and finds not only the right word for what he sees, but the right word for his own poetry :

Yondir down dwinis the evin sky away,
And up springis the bricht dawing of day
Intill ane uthir place nocht fer in sunder
Quhilk to behald was plesance and half wonder.

He sees a new thing in the life of the world—no poet that I know of (except Homer) had thought of it before—and in naming it he gives the interpretation also, the spirit of poetry: plesance, and half wonder.

This sort of miracle, this sudden glory, is an escape from the fashion of the time, and the fashions of poetry, the successive schools are such that escapes are not so difficult as in the other arts. The history of poetry must be the history of schools and fashions. But the progress of poesy does not mean simply the refutation of old schools by new fashions. The poets have sometimes thought so; like Keats in *Hyperion*, possibly; like Dante when he speaks of the older lyric poetry as distained by comparison with the sweet new style, *dolce stil nuovo*, of his own masters and fellows. But apart from the grace that you may find in the older fashion as a whole, taking it as an antiquarian curiosity, there is the chance, the certainty, that here and there among the old songs you will come upon something new, independent, a miracle. In the old lyric poetry of Provence, which has been made a byword for conventionality and monotonous repetition, there are poems that seem to start afresh, worth dwelling on and remembering. This is true also of the other similar school of the German minnesingers, which has been equally maligned.

Mnemosyne, Mother of the Muses, has allowed many things to pass into oblivion. But the

Memory of the World in poetry keeps alive everything that is kept at all, and in such a way that at any time it may turn to something new. The simplest measures of verse, the best known stories, you can never be sure that they are out of date. The stories of the Greek mythology have long ago been indexed. I have an old Dutch Ovid in prose, the *Metamorphosis* translated 'for the behoof of all noble spirits and artists, such as rhetoricians, painters, engravers, goldsmiths, &c.' Nothing could be more business like: a handy book of suitable subjects then; now long abandoned, you would say, in the march of intellect. Yet we know how the old tragic legend of Procne and Philomela turned into the *Itylus* of *Poems and Ballads*:

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow
The heart's division divideth us;
Thy heart is light as leaf of a tree,
But mine goes forth among seagulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

There is no need for me to say more of this:
Who hath remembered, who hath forgotten?
For the present, I have spoken long enough.

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PROSE RHYTHM IN ENGLISH

BY

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PROSE RHYTHM IN ENGLISH

The suggestions which I venture to put forward in this lecture occurred to me recently while I was reading Saintsbury's *History of English Prose Rhythm*. I realize that I am guilty of temerity in writing upon a subject which lies outside the range of my usual work, and can only excuse myself by saying that I have studied similar phenomena in ancient and mediaeval prose. Some three years ago I published a paper upon the mediaeval *cursus*, which contained a brief introduction to the study of numerous prose.[1] Since, however, I cannot hope that more than a few of my listeners may have seen this, I must begin by repeating a few points.

For the origin of prose rhythm we must go to Cicero. Nature, he tells us, has placed in the ears a register which tells us if a rhythm is good or bad, just as by the same means we are enabled to distinguish notes in music. Men first observed that particular sounds gave pleasure to the ear, then they repeated them for this end. Thus, practice came first and was succeeded by theory. The rhythm of prose is based on the same principle as that of verse. This in ancient prose was the distribution of long and short syllables; in our own tongue it is the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables. The difference between the rhythms of prose and verse is said to be one of degree. In verse the metre is constant and unbroken, in prose the measures are loose and irregular. In this respect prose is said to resemble lyric poetry, a very suggestive remark.

The theory of ancient writers is, that the whole sentence is pervaded or 'winged' by rhythm, or 'number', but that this number is most noticeable in the cadence, or *clausula*. The sentence is termed period, and its parts are called *commata* and *cola*. There is a cadence at the end of the colon, and to a less extent at the end of the comma, similar to that at the end of the period. At the end of each there is a beat or κρότος, similar to that used in music or poetry. Whenever the speaker paused to draw fresh breath, he punctuated by a *numerus*, or cadence. Thus, as I have said elsewhere, 'the *numeri* coincide with the beats and reveal the secret of

[1] *The Cursus in Mediaeval and Vulgar Latin*, Oxford, 1910.

ancient punctuation.'[1] So also in the twelfth century A. D. Pope Gregory VIII speaks of the pause in the middle of a sentence *post punctum vel post metrum*.[2] In this connexion it is interesting to notice that the person who is said to have invented *numeri*, i. e. the use of rhythmical cadences in prose, Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, is also said to have first pointed out the nature of the κῶλον and the period. We still use the terms comma and colon, but in a new sense, i. e. to mark the grammatical construction. For this the ancients did not care, their punctuation was founded on delivery. Their ears were far sharper than ours, and their speech was more musical. Thus, we hear of an occasion when a Roman orator brought down the house by a sentence ending with a double trochee, while a Greek audience would beat time with a monotonous speaker, anticipating the inevitable finale.

Cicero gives examples of perfect prose, in which it is impossible to vary the order without destroying the rhythm. He also attempted to give rules for composition, distinguishing between good and bad endings. Here he was not so successful. His examples agree but imperfectly with his own practice, and he has no coherent theory to propose. The one statement which is really fruitful, and which tends to emerge more and more clearly in subsequent writers, is that the chief ingredient in prose rhythm is the cretic. He laboured under the same difficulty as we do to-day. We know that, when we write, we choose a word or a collocation, because our ears tell us that it is right. Also, when we read a piece of perfect English, we are conscious of a bewitching rhythm, but we cannot tell wherein the charm resides. It is necessary to insist on this point, since many writers assume that the last word on Latin rhythm was said by Cicero, and turn deaf ears to all the results of modern analysis. They say, 'I will go as far as Cicero went, and not one step further. The modern method is not that of Cicero.' The answer is, 'Quite true, but Cicero failed.'

The secret of ancient prose was discovered recently, and that in a curious manner. The inquiry was started in 1880 by Noel Valois in a tract upon the art of letter writing in France in the Middle Ages. He drew attention to certain texts in which the use of three methods of ending a clause or sentence is inculcated. These are termed *cursus planus*, *cursus tardus*, *cursus velox*. Fresh contributions were made by a number of scholars. It was shown that the three forms of the *cursus* were not peculiar to letter writing, but were

[1] *Cursus*, p. 5. [2] *Fontes Prosae Numerosae*, p. 35.

employed in a vast body of literature. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the *cursus* was adopted by the Roman *curia*, and rules for its use were laid down by various Popes. The *planus* consists of five syllables with accents on the first and fourth, e. g. *vóces testántur*; the *tardus* of six syllables, also with accents on the first and fourth, e. g. *méa curátio*; and the *velox* of seven syllables with accents on the first and sixth, e. g. *gáudia pervenire*. Modern writers would attribute to the last a minor accent on the fourth syllable. The English equivalents for these forms would be, e. g. *sérvants depárted, pérfect felícity, glórious ùndertáking*. The next step was to show that these accentual clausulae were already used in writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and were preceded by a system in which quantity, not stress, played the chief part. Thus *vóces testántur* is preceded by *vōcĕ tĕstātur*, *méa curátio* by *nōstră cūrātĭō*, and *gáudia pèrvenire* by *gāudĭūm pĕrvĕnīrĕ*. This metrical system was shown to go back to classical Latin prose, and to be present in the writings of Cicero himself. Meanwhile patient workers had been tabulating the endings of Cicero's sentences, and arrived independently at the result that his favourite forms were exactly those which correspond to the three forms of the *cursus*. These may be reduced to a single formula, viz. a cretic base with a trochaic cadence of varying length.[1] This, however, was no new invention of Latin writers: like everything else it came from Greece. The prose of Demosthenes, like that of Cicero, is 'winged' with numbers, and Roman writers quote as examples of his severe rhythm μηδὲ τοξεύῃ and τοῖς θεοῖς εὔχομαι, which are examples of the *planus* and *tardus*. The Asiatic writers chiefly affected the ending with a double trochee, which corresponds to the mediaeval *velox*. Before Demosthenes we find the same favourite forms in the prose of Isocrates, which already exhibits the same rhythms as those which pervade the prose of Cicero. We are thus dealing with a development which extended over a period of nearly 2,000 years. I do not, of course, imply that the favourite rhythms were at first so frequent as they became subsequently. There was originally a rich variety of cadences. In course of time the three special forms became increasingly common, until finally, like Aaron's rod, they swallow up their competitors. The final result was that prose composition became stereotyped.

I have tried to state the case as simply as possible, since this is not the occasion for a minute discussion of the ancient clausula. I must add that various licences are allowed. The commonest of these is the

[1] The last syllable is always *anceps* as in verse.

substitution of two short syllables for one long, e. g. *ēssĕ vĭdĕārĕ* in Form i: so also *ēssĕ vĭdĕāmĭnī* in Form ii.[1] These varieties survive in the *cursus*. Thus for *esse videatur* the accentual equivalent is *mála nocuísset*, and for *ésse videámini* we find e. g. *míssae celebrátio*. Another frequent licence is the prolongation of the trochaic cadence by another syllable (Form iv), e. g. *spíritum pèrtimescere*, which in the *cursus* becomes *cúriae véstrae scríbere*. There is also a very interesting variation, viz. the substitution for special purposes of a spondee for the trochee in the cadence, which did not pass into the *cursus*. Of this I will speak shortly.

The remarks of the ancients on prose rhythm have naturally led various inquirers to ask if similar phenomena are to be found in our own tongue. Saintsbury tells us that Bishop Hurd wrote on the rhythm of Addison, and John Mason, a Nonconformist minister, in 1749 published an essay on the 'Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers'. These writers tried to apply to English prose the rules laid down by Cicero and Quintilian. The task was one in which success was impossible. In the first place, there is the essential difference that Latin rhythm depends on quantity and English rhythm on stress. Secondly, there is the fact that Latin is a polysyllabic language, while English is largely monosyllabic. Lastly, it has been shown that Cicero and Quintilian did not grasp the secret principles by which they were themselves influenced. Their disciples, therefore, were following blind guides.

In spite of all the obscurities which surround the subject, no one has doubted that there are principles at work, if only we could grasp them. Thus various friends have suggested to me that regular rhythms are to be found in Gibbon and Macaulay. I had myself some two years ago amused myself by tabulating forms of the *cursus* to be found in the speeches of that very rhythmical orator, Mr. Lloyd George.

The question was put on a fresh basis by a paper written by Mr. John Shelly, which appeared last year in the *Church Quarterly Review*. In this he shows that the writers of the Prayer Book adopted in the Collects and in other parts of the liturgy rhythms identical with those which they found in their copy, viz. the Missal and Breviary. This throws light upon a remark which I have heard more than once, that it seems impossible now for any one to write a good Collect. Mr. Shelly goes on to show that these rhythms passed into current use and have persisted to the present time. Thus he quotes from a sermon of Newman, in which twelve clauses in one sentence end

[1] These varieties are known as i^2 and ii^2. In both of them the second long syllable is replaced by two shorts. So also other resolutions, e. g. iii^2.

with some form of the *cursus*. He thinks that Newman's style must have been influenced by his prolonged study of the Fathers.

Saintsbury refers to Mr. Shelly's paper, which was published after his own book was in type. He says, however, 'I doubt whether Latin cadences are patient of exact adjustment to English. I also doubt the possibility of effectually introducing, with us, the so-called *cursus*.' The method which he follows himself is the traditional one, that founded on Cicero and Quintilian. He used quantitative symbols throughout, marking stressed syllables long and unstressed syllables short. There are various points in his system which may be criticized, but I do not propose to deal with these now, and would only refer to some objections which I have raised in the *Oxford Magazine* (April 24, 1913). The most disconcerting feature in his book is the lack of positive results. He professes himself unable to give any rules by which fine effects are to be attained, 'any prose-forms corresponding to the recognized forms of verse.' So also he remarks, 'I disdain, detest, abominate, and in every other English and classical form renounce the attempt to show how a prose-harmonist should develop his harmony.' Here he is a little inconsistent, since elsewhere he relents in favour of a particular combination.[1] His final judgement, however, is that 'as the essence of verse-metre is its identity, at least in equivalence and recurrence, so the essence of prose rhythm lies in variety and divergence'. When commenting on the finale of Browne's *Urn Burial*, he notes that in his scansion 'no two identical feet ever follow each other, not so much as on a single occasion'. The reader cannot but suspect that there must be some flaw in a method which produces such small results.

While I venture to criticize Saintsbury's method, I am full of admiration for his fine taste, which is shown not only by felicitous criticisms expressed in striking phrases, but also his selection of passages from the greatest authors, which, in his judgement, are perfect examples of prose rhythm. He has formed a collection of what he calls 'diploma pieces'. This is a contribution of the greatest value, since on this subject he speaks with authority. He has the advantage of a sensitive and highly trained ear, and if he says that the rhythm is flawless, we have no alternative save to accept his judgement. Saintsbury, therefore, has performed the great service of focussing the question. If his diploma pieces do not reveal the nature of English prose rhythm, it is idle to search elsewhere.

I cannot but think that Saintsbury pushes the principle of variety

[1] Dochmiac, third paeon, and amphibrach.

too far. I do not for one moment dispute that it is one of the ingredients in prose rhythm. The essence, however, of rhythm both in prose and verse is regularity of beat. As Dionysius says, prose is εὔρυθμος, since διαπεποίκιλταί τισιν ῥυθμοῖς, but not ἔρρυθμος, since οὐχὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό. This, he remarks, is true of all prose which exhibits τὸ ποιητικὸν καὶ μελικόν, e.g. that of Demosthenes.

That in English rhythmical prose is closely allied to verse is shown by the extreme ease with which we drop into blank verse. Saintsbury remarks that Chaucer, whom he calls the Father of English prose, although in his prose works he eschews rhyme, cannot avoid metre. Thus the tale of Melibee 'opens with a batch of almost exactly cut blank verse lines'.

> A young man called Melibeus, mighty and wise begat
> Upon his wife, that callèd was Prudence
> A daughter which that callèd was Sophie.

Saintsbury gives several instances where a skilful writer avoids blank verse by various devices. Thus Malory writes

> And so Sir Lancelot and the damsel departed,

where *maid* for *damsel* would produce blank verse.

So de Quincey says

> Among the lovely households of the roe-deer,

where the addition of *roe* breaks the measure.

The most striking *tour de force* is the dream of Amyas Leigh in Kingsley's *Westward Ho*, which Saintsbury arranges as a piece of continuous blank verse, pointing out that 'from time to time words are inserted which break the regularity of the rhythm and remind the reader that after all it is not meant to be metre'. He considers it a successful experiment, but applies to such an experiment a remark of the late Professor Bain on the subject of kissing, that 'the occasion should be adequate and the actuality rare'.

I would now call attention to two statements made by Saintsbury. The first is that in Old English or Anglo-Saxon the rhythm is mainly trochaic. He speaks of a 'continuous trochaic roll which at the énd of línes is prácticálly ómniprésent'.[1] This 'trochaic hum' is said to be due to the character of the language, which, being 'largely monosyllabic and at the same time inflected, necessarily begets trochees ready made in still larger quantities'. The second statement is, that in Middle English the 'trochaic tyranny' was mitigated by the disuse

[1] Here he employs six consecutive trochees, a good example of this 'roll'.

of inflection and the introduction of a more polysyllabic vocabulary taken from the Romance languages and from Latin. This process begins with Chaucer and is consummated by the writers of the Prayer Book and the Authorized Version who had Latin models before them. The rhythm of Middle English, we are told, is 'composite', i.e. partly native and partly Latin.

This is an observation of the highest importance, and suggests a method of attacking the problem, which is, so far as I know, new. It is briefly this. If we take passages which Saintsbury considers perfect—and here his judgement seems to me infallible—and mark those rhythms which are Latin in character, the probability is that the residue, and especially those effects which are wholly alien to the Latin system, are native. We are dealing with two quantities, one of which is known. This being so, we ought to be able to discover something about the unknown quantity.

Before I go further, it is necessary to say something on the subject of word division, or *caesura*. In the examples which I have given previously, I have for the sake of clearness made the clausula begin with a word. This, however, is not necessary. Thus *vultusque moverunt, iactabit audacia, nefarium concupisti* are just as good as *voce testatur, nostra curatio, gaudium pervenire*. So also in English the rhythm of *obéy thy commándments* and *keép thy commándments* is the same. The caesura within the clausula requires special attention, since here a difference between English and Latin becomes visible.

In order to make the point clear, we must go back to Latin. Here in Form i there are five possible varieties, which have been distinguished thus:[1]

1 α bālnĕātōrī.
1 β nōn ŏpōrtērĕ.
1 γ vōcĕ tēstātŭr.
1 δ cāllĭdē fēcĭt.
1 ε rēstĭtūtī sūnt.

The favourite caesura in Form i, in classical Latin, is γ, and in the *cursus* this becomes normal. This is also true of Form ii, but in Form iii the δ type is usual in classical Latin and normal in the *cursus*. The exact equivalents, therefore, in English are e. g. *sérvants depárted, pérfect felícity, glórious ùndertáking*. Since, however, English is chiefly disyllabic and monosyllabic, the *cursus* becomes modified in the process of naturalization. Thus in i the favourite type is γδ, e. g. *dúty and sérvice, hónour and glóry*. This combination, it may be noticed,

[1] Zielinski, *das Clauselgesetz*, p. 27.

emphasizes the trochaic rhythm which is natural to the language. We find many other varieties, e. g.

$\beta\gamma$ thése our misdóings, praíse and thanksgíving.
$\beta\gamma\delta$ déw of thy bléssing, síght of the heáthen.
$\gamma\epsilon$ mércy upón us.

So also in ii,[1] e. g.

$\beta\gamma$ jóy and felícity.
$\gamma\delta$ Cána of Gálilee.
$\delta\epsilon\zeta$ cómeth to júdge the earth.
$\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta$ shíne for thy líght is come.

Also in iii, e. g.

$\gamma\delta$ pásseth all ùnderstánding.
$\gamma\delta\zeta$ sérvice is pérfect freédom.

It may be noticed that other varieties of the *cursus* are represented in English. Thus Form iv, e. g. *spīrĭtūm pērtĭmēscĕrĕ* (=*cúriae véstrae scríbere*) corresponds to *boúntiful líberálity, heávenly bènedíction, plénary àbsolútion.* Also, Cicero's *esse videare* (1^2), which in the *cursus* is succeeded by *mála nocuísset*, is paralleled in English by e. g. *glóry everlásting.* We find modifications of this with more than one caesura, e. g. *glóry of the Fáther, wrítten for our leárning, índustry and lábour.*

The scansion *glóry everlásting* is in accordance with the rules followed in accentual Latin. Here, if a word like *videátur* is preceded by one unaccented syllable, e. g. *míhi*, the first two syllables are not accented. Thus *míhi videátur* is the successor of Cicero's *ēssĕ vĭdĕātŭr.* If, however, it is preceded by two unaccented syllables, e. g. *plúrima vìdeántur*, then the first syllable receives a minor accent. Thus *glóry everlásting* corresponds to *míhi videátur* and *glórious, èverlásting* to *plúrima vìdeántur.*

So also we find parallels for other resolutions, e. g. *sílly agitátion*, which corresponds to *ēssĕ vĭdĕ.īmĭnī.* This is to be contrasted with *fúrious àgitátion.*

I am aware that in chants the usual accentuation is *glóry èverlásting.* This, I take it, is due to the 'trochaic roll', inherent in the language, which has mastered the Latin cadence.

[1] The exact equivalent with the γ caesura only is rare, except when the last word is of Latin origin, e. g. *óther advérsity, sérvant Victória, etérnal salvátion, pérfect contrítion.* In modern English such words as *salvation* are pronounced as trisyllables, in the Prayer Book they are quadrisyllables. Thus *etérnal salvátion* is equivalent to *aetérna salvátio* (*tardus*).

Mr. Shelly points out that out of ninety-five cases in the Collects which do not belong to forms of the *cursus* no less than seventy-one end with an accented syllable, e. g. *ármour of líght, contémpt of thy wórd.* This is wholly alien to Latin. The Latin accent is never on the last syllable of a word, and accented monosyllables were carefully avoided at the end of a sentence. Such an ending was felt to be bizarre, as in Horace's line—

parturiunt montes, nascetur ridículus mus.

Here, therefore, we have a clear case of a native rhythm as distinct from the *cursus.*

In several examples where an accented monosyllable comes at the end, there is a marked trochaic cadence, e. g. *fórty dáys and fórty níghts, pléase thee bóth in wíll and deéd, thiévish córners óf the streéts.* The most striking instance which I have noticed is in the *Te Deum*, viz.—

We, thérefore, práy thee, hélp thy sérvants, whóm thou hást redeémed wíth thy précious bloód.

We find similar prolongation of the trochaic movement when the last word is a disyllable, e. g. *máke thy chósen peóple jóyful*; *fíre and brímstone, stórm and témpest.* In Latin this would be very bad; in English our ears tell us that it is good. Here, also, again we have something which is not Latin. The trochaic hum rises above the soft music of the *cursus.*

Saintsbury quotes a passage from Bishop Fisher to illustrate the development of harmonious prose in the time of Henry the Eighth. The sentence begins as follows:[1]

No creature may express how jóyful the sínner is (2), when he knóweth and ùnderstándeth (3) himself to be delivered from the great búrden and heáviness (2).

Here the influence of the *cursus* is clearly visible.

When discussing the *A. V.*, he selects the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah as one of the highest points touched by English Prose:

Arise, shíne, for thy líght is cóme (2) and the glory of the Lord is rísen upón thee (1). For, behold, the darkness shall cóver the eárth (*) and gróss dárkness the péople (1), but the Lórd shall aríse upón thee (3) and his glóry sháll[2] be seén upón thee (*) and the Gentiles shall cóme to thy líght (*) and kings to the bríghtness of thy rísing (1[2]).

[1] In this as in other citations I add the stress-accents where they appear to cast light on the rhythm. Asterisks mean that there is no Latin equivalent.

[2] Saintsbury scans *glŏrў shăll bĕ.* It seems to me that there is a stress on *shall.* If so, we have a succession of trochees. If, however, there is no stress, then the form is the Latin iii[2].

Here two clausulae, viz. *cóver the éarth* and *cóme to thy líght*, both of which end in a stressed monosyllable, are clearly not Latin in character.

Saintsbury draws attention to the effect produced by the monosyllable *shíne* at the beginning of the sentence. This is made more emphatic by the fact that it is preceded by another stressed syllable, viz. *aríse*. He also points out the fine effect of the adjective in *gróss dárkness*. Here also there is a similar clash of accents. We are now face to face with a fundamental difference between the *cursus* and the native rhythm. The main object in the *cursus* is to secure an interval between stressed and unstressed syllables. In the *planus* and *tardus* there is an interval of two unstressed syllables between the two stresses, and in the *velox* of four, or if we allow the minor accent on the fourth syllable, two also. The same rule prevails in Greek Prose of the Byzantine period. This collision of accents appears to introduce sublimity in English Prose.[1] Further on in this paper I shall give other examples: here I would merely call attention to the effect in the Confession of the conflicting accents in

We have erred and strayed from thy wáys, líke lóst sheép.

Here the stressed monosyllables produce the effect of a wail.

No author is treated by Saintsbury with more enthusiasm than Sir Thomas Browne. He gives a long quotation from *Urn Burial*, which he pronounces to be a 'spaced and rested symphony'. It begins with the famous sentence:

Nów sínce thése deád bónes have alreády outlásted (1) the living onés of Methúsaleh (2) and in a yárd únder groûnd (*) and thín wálls of cláy (*) oútwórn áll the stróng and spécious buíldings abóve it (1) and quíetly résted (1) under the drúms and trámplings of threé cónquésts.

Saintsbury very happily compares the opening five monosyllables to 'thuds of earth dropping on the coffin-lid'. The passage is remarkable for the collision of stress accents, viz. *yárd únder, thín wálls, threé cónquésts*. It will be noticed that it contains two disyllables with a stress accent on each syllable, viz. *óutwórn* and *cónquésts*. The clausula *trámplings of threé cónquests* is of special interest since it may be illustrated by parallels in classical Latin.

We find from time to time in Cicero and other authors a striking deviation from the ordinary trochaic cadence, viz. the substitution of a spondee for the trochee. This is most common in Form iii, which thus becomes $- \cup - \mid - - \mid - \overline{\cup}$, e.g. *includuntur in cārcĕrĕm*

[1] Cf. For the Lórd is a greát Gód, and a greát Kíng abóve áll góds.

cōndēmnāti, commōtŭs ēst, sūdāt, pāllēt, but is also found in Form ii, e. g. *ēbrĭīs sērvīrĕ, lībĕrī sērvī ōdērūnt.* This harsh rhythm is reserved for passages in a major key. I have examined all the occasions in the Philippics where it occurs, and find this true almost without exception. Zielinski says of such rhythms, 'then comes the hammer stroke'.

Here *trámplings of thrée cónquests* appears to be the English equivalent of *ēbrĭīs sērvīrĕ.*

I would compare Saintsbury's remark upon a sentence of Thomas Hobbes, viz.:

In great difference of persons the greater have often fallen in love with the méaner, but nót cóntráry.[1]

He remarks, 'every time of reading—at least I have found it so for some half-century—the penetrating, but not clangorous dirge-sound will be heard more clearly.'

Meáner but nót cóntráry is an English parallel for *carcerem condemnati.* Saintsbury's dirge-sound corresponds to Zielinski's hammer stroke.

Browne in this passage varies his rhythms. Thus a sentence which Saintsbury singles out for special praise is purely Latin, viz.:

According to the ordaíner of órder (1) and mýstical màthemátics (3) of the cíty of heáven (1).

The mixed rhythm of English prose was now fixed, and its general character appears to be the same in passages quoted from various authors. The style of Addison is interesting, since a contemporary, Bishop Hurd, tried to find in it observance of the rules laid down by Cicero and Quintilian. In this connexion a criticism of Hurd is quoted. He says:

'Oŭr sīght ĭs thĕ mōst cŏmplēte ănd mōst dĕlīghtfŭl sēnse wĕ hāve.' Here, except the second foot, which is an anapaest, the rest of them are all of one kind, i.e. iambics. Read now with Mr. Addison—'Oŭr sīght ĭs thĕ mōst pērfĕct ănd mōst dĕlīghtfŭl ŏf āll oŭr sĕnsĕs'—and you see how the rhythm is varied by the intermixture of other feet, besides that short redundant syllable *-ses* gives to the close a slight and negligent air, which has a better effect, in this place, than the proper iambic foot.

[1] Saintsbury scans *cōntrărў*, but the old pronunciation seems to have been *contráry*, corresponding to the Latin *contrārius.* In modern English the accent has shifted, with the result that the long syllable has been shortened.

Here *delíghtful of áll our sénses* is Form iii, while *delíghtful sénse we háve* is an example of the trochaic roll to which attention has been called. *Our síght is the móst compléte* is Form ii, while *our síght is the móst pérfect*, which Hurd prefers, is an example of S 2, the spondaic rhythm which I have just discussed.

The first sentence in Saintsbury's extract from Gibbon is:

The protection of the Rháetian fróntier (1) and the persecution of the Cátholic Chúrch (*) detained Constántius in Ítaly (2^2) above eighteen months after the depárture of Júlian (2).

The clausulae here are Latin except *Cátholic Chúrch*.

Saintsbury's remarks upon *depárture of Júlian* are suggestive. After stating that 'Gibbon's everlasting irony is assisted by rhythm', he says that 'for actual cadences some have noted a recession or rescission towards trochaic ending as in *āftĕr thĕ dĕpārtŭre ŏf Jūliăn*'. He prefers to arrange it 'āftĕr | thĕ dĕpārtŭre | ŏf Jūliăn, thus giving that juxtaposition of paeon (chiefly third) and amphibrach which will be found almost omnipresent in Gibbon and which may be a proximate cause of his peculiar undulation'. This statement is noticeable in view of Saintsbury's insistence upon variety as the chief factor in prose rhythm. I would remark in the first place that *Julian* appears to be a trisyllable, not a disyllable. If so, the clausula is an example of No. 2. If not, then it is No. 1.

Saintsbury's third paeon and amphibrach give us the sequence ⏑⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑, i. e. ~ ~ ⏓ ~ ~ ⏓ ~. Here the first two syllables, according to my view, do not affect the rhythm, and the other five, viz. ⏓ ~ ~ ⏓ ~, are the ordinary formula for the *cursus planus*.

Saintsbury notices that 'the word values are arranged with evident cunning' in the following extract from Coleridge:

The woody Castle Crag between mé and Lodóre (*) is a rich flower-gárden of cólours (1), the brightest yéllows with the deépest crímsons (3^2) and the ínfinite shádes of brówn and greén (4) . . . Little woól-packs of whíte bríght vápour (S 3) rest on different súmmits and declívities (2^2).

He remarks: 'In *the brightest* | *yellows* | *with the deepest* | *crimsons* (amphibrach, trochee, third paeon, trochee) I almost dare to say we glimpse one of our panthers, a common prose combination corresponding to a verse.' I scan *yéllows with the deépest crímsons* as 3^2. Cf. the Latin *frōnde căpŭt ōbvŏlūtŭm*.

He calls attention to 'the familiar-unfamiliar word *woolpacks*,

the parts of which might have no sense at all—it is so perfectly expressive, in sound, of what it means'. The rhythm would rather seem to reside in the collision of accents, viz. *white bright vapour. Woŏl-packs of white bright vapour* is the English equivalent for Cicero's *mōtŭs ĕst, sūdāt pāllĕt* (S 3).

De Quincey supplies 'a perfect type in miniature of rhythmed prose', viz.:

And her éyes, if they were éver seén (*), would be neíther sweét nor súbtle (*); no mán could reád their stóry (*): they would be found fílled with périshing dreáms (*), and with wrecks of forgótten delírium (2).

The interest of this short sentence, which Saintsbury terms 'a magazine of the secrets of its kind', is that it contains only one Latin rhythm, viz. *forgótten delírium,* and that in the clausula, where tune is most required. The other effects appear to be indigenous. Here we recognize the prolonged trochaic run in *neíther sweét nor súbtle* and *mán could reád their stóry* and the accented monosyllable at the end of the clauses *éver seén* and *périshing dreáms,* for which Latin has no parallel.

De Quincey can also write in the Latin style, as in the following extract, which Saintsbury calls beautifully rhythmical:

Out of the darkness . . . uprises the héavenly fáce of Fánny (3). One áfter the óther (1) like the antiphónies in the chóral sérvice (3^2) rise Fánny and the róse in Júne (2^2), then báck agaín the róse in Júne and Fánny (*). Then cóme both togéther (1), as in a chorus, róses and Fánnies (1), Fánnies and róses (1), without end, thick as blóssoms in Páradise (2).

Fanny here is the musical unit, which lends itself admirably to the different combinations. In one case we have the trochaic rhythm of Anglo-Saxon, viz. *báck agaín the róse in Júne and Fánny*: the other clausulae are Latin.

From Landor I would take two passages, the first of which is put by Saintsbury beside de Quincey's gem in the *Mater Suspiriorum* as 'unsurpassed since the renaissance of numerous prose':

There is a gloom in deép lóve as in deép wáter (S 2): there is a silence in it which suspénds the foót (*), and the fólded árms (*) and the dejécted heád (*) are the ímages it reflécts (*)[1]. Nó voíce shákes its súrface (*): the Muses thémsélves approách it (*) with a tárdy and

[1] Possibly *it* should here be stressed. If so, we have Form ii.

a tímid stép (2^2), and with a low and tremulous and mélancholy[1] sóng (*).

Here the rhythms seem due to indigenous factors, the collision of accents, viz. *deép lóve, deép wáter, nó voice shákes, Múses thémsélves*, the stressed monosyllable at the end of the clauses, *suspénds the foót, fólded árms, dejécted heád, tímid stép, mélancholy sóng*, and the trochaic run which pervades the passage. The only clauses for which Latin affords any parallel are *lóve as in deép wáter*, and *tárdy and a tímid stép*. Of the mediaeval *cursus* there is no trace.

Another passage which Saintsbury terms 'a little more rhetorical' yields different results:

Thére are nó fiélds of ámaranth (4) on thís síde of the gráve (*), there are no voíces O Rhódope (2) that are nót soón múte (*), hówever túneful (1), thére is nó náme (*), with whatever emphasis of pássionate lóve repeáted (3), of which the écho is not faínt at lást (2^2).

Carlyle's prose is said by Saintsbury to be essentially Wagnerian, containing 'rhythm fragments of extreme beauty, united by a master harmony which pervades the jangle'. He quotes a description of Spanish soldiers marching to Chile:

Eách sóldier láy at níght (*) wrápped in his póncho (1), with his knápsack for píllow (1) under the cánopy of heáven (1^2), lúllabied by hárd trávail (*) and súnk soón enough ínto steády nòse-mélody (2), ínto the foólishest roúgh cólt dánce of unimáginable Dreáms (*).

Here the collision of stressed monosyllables is noticeable, viz. *eách sóldier, hárd trávail*, and *roúgh cólt dánce*, also the stressed monosyllable *dreams* at the end of the sentence. The rhythm *steády nòse-mélody* deserves especial attention. This is exactly similar to the metrical Form ii used in classical Latin, e. g. *nōstră cūrātīō*, i. e. a cretic followed by a trochee. In the *cursus*, e. g. *méa curátio* or *bóna remédia*, the third syllable is shortened by the tug of the accent, which shortens unstressed syllables, as in modern Greek or English. Consequently, while Terentianus Maurus assigns to the cretic a *beata sedes* in the clausula just before the end, Pope Gregory VIII (A. D. 1187) says, '*finales dictiones debet quasi pes dactilus antecurrere*.' Now in *steády nòse-melody* the dactyl has become a cretic again. This, I take it, is due to the fact that the monosyllable *nose* resists the tug of the accents in *steády* and *melody*. If, therefore, a stressed monosyllable occupies this place in English, the base is a cretic rather than a dactyl. It is for this

[1] Saintsbury scans *mĕlănchŏlў* according to the present pronunciation.

reason that in the previous extract from Landor I treat *thére are nó fiélds of ámaranth* as an example of Form iv. Carlyle continues:

Canópus and the Soúthern Cróss (2^2) glítter dówn and áll snóres steádily begírt by gránite déserts (*), looked on by the constellátions in that mánner (1^1).

Saintsbury notices that rhythm is here the determining factor, and says that 'Cănōpŭs | ănd thĕ Soūthĕrn | Crōss are chosen from the Host of Heaven to look down on the incongruous snorers because of the desirable combination of amphibrach, third paean, and monosyllable'. I take the clause to be 2^2 ending with a stressed monosyllable, and would draw attention to the trochaic movement in *begírt by gránite déserts*.

Macaulay's rhythm is very classical, e.g.

And there the ladies whose lips more persuásive than thóse of Fóx himsélf (4) had carried the Westmínster eléction (1) against pálace and treásury (2) shóne roúnd Geórgiána (? 3), Dúchess of Dévonshire (2).

Geórgiána here is a beautiful double-trochee, and I am rather surprised that Macaulay did not complete the rhythm by writing *shóne aroùnd*, in which case the clausula would have been wholly Latin. Wherever we get a double trochee, it is easy to construct perfect specimens of the *velox*, e.g. *beaútiful Píccadílly, Látin and Ánglo-Sáxon*.

Saintsbury notices Macaulay's fondness for trochaic endings, and says that 'the staccato style undoubtedly invites them and so in very modern work gives a throw-back to the most ancient'. This is a very suggestive remark. The cadences to which he refers are simply those of classical and mediaeval prose.

Newman is pronounced to have been one of the greatest masters of quietly exquisite prose. This statement is interesting in view of the facts pointed out by Mr. Shelly, to which I have already alluded. The prose of Ruskin hardly falls within the scope of this discussion, since frequently it transcends the limits of prose and becomes poetry. Saintsbury notices in one extract successions of eight, ten, and thirteen blank verses, while in another place Ruskin actually drops into rhyme.

Pater is said to have been the most remarkable writer belonging to the last division of the nineteenth century. While Ruskin may be charged with absence of quiet, quietude is the chief feature of Pater. 'On this apex of English Prose, if on no other, there is rest.' Pater's

composition as a whole inclines to the non-Latin type, as may be seen from the sentence:

Throúgh his strange veíl of síght (2) thíngs reách him só (*): in no órdinary níght or dáy (2²), but as in faínt líght of eclípse (*), or in sóme briéf ínterval (*) of fálling raín at dáybreak (*), or throúgh deép wáter (*).

Here we notice the strings of stressed monosyllables and the resultant clash of accents: also the predominant trochaic roll. Of Latin influence there is little to find.

I now venture to put together some reflections which present themselves to the mind after this discussion.

Rhythm in poetry depends upon the recurrence of longs and shorts, or stressed and unstressed syllables, in a regular order. In prose the effect is produced by the same means, but the metre is not complete. We have to deal with two principles, viz. that of recurrence and that of variety. Saintsbury appears to attribute too much importance to variety, which, if not modified by some sort of system, however loose, results in chaos.

The rhythm natural to a language depends upon its vocabulary. Here there is an obvious difference between Latin and English. Latin is essentially a polysyllabic language, while most words in English are disyllables and monosyllables. This difference is fundamental and must always be borne in mind. On the other hand there is a striking point of similarity, namely the trochaic cadence which is a characteristic of both languages. This was modified in Latin by the cretic base which precedes the trochaic movement, and the use of harsher measures in the middle of the clauses. The trochaic rhythm is chiefly found in the *clausula*, and does not generally extend further than over a few syllables. In English the trochaic movement pervades the whole sentence and frequently produces the effect of blank verse.

The three forms of the *cursus* came into English from Latin and from the Romance languages. When Latin words were naturalized, they brought with them the cadences in which the genius of the Latin tongue found best expression. The introduction of such words was largely due to their occurrence in the liturgy of the Church, and to their consequent adoption by the authors of the Prayer Book and the translators of the Bible. These cadences, however, were modified when they became anglicized, owing to the lack of polysyllables. The English *cursus* presses monosyllables into its service with the result that, although the scheme of accentuation is the same, the caesuras are more numerous and more varied. No attempt was

made to make the *cursus* universal. This would have been to force the language into a bed of Procrustes. The native elements, viz. the trochaic roll and the stressed monosyllable, were combined with the exotic. The rhythm of English is mixed, like the nation itself, and the mixture constitutes its charm. In this respect English differs from mediaeval prose and frequently presents analogies to the freer system of Cicero and Demosthenes. We have won our way back from monotony and servitude to variety and liberty.

It would appear that the sublimest effects in English prose are produced by the native not the exotic rhythm. The two chief means employed appear to be the collision of accents which is alien to the binary movement [1] of mediaeval prose and the prolongation of the trochaic roll with its tendency towards blank verse. The object of the *cursus* was to procure a smooth ending, or, as its name implies, a 'run'. It produces harmony, not grandeur, and imparts to prose an element of tune.

[1] *Cursus*, p. 22.

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Roland à Roncevaux

BY

JOSEPH BÉDIER

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ROLAND À RONCEVAUX

Cultivant la science, nous ne sommes pas, nous Français, de ceux qui disent 'notre science'.[1] Et vous non plus, les savants d'Angleterre, vous n'êtes pas de ceux-là. Mais, pour avoir multiplié entre nous, au cours des siècles, les liens spirituels, nous savons, vous et nous, qu'il est bon et salutaire de nous faire tour à tour, au grand sens où l'entendait Rabelais, prêteurs et emprunteurs. 'Tous soient debteurs, disait-il, tous soient presteurs! Croyez que chose divine est prester; debvoir est vertu héroïque.'[2] En cet esprit vous m'avez appelé, quoique indigne; et, comme un pèlerin qui chemine vers une basilique lointaine, lumineuse et chère, je suis venu, non pour donner, mais pour recevoir. En cet esprit, l'humaniste que je suis rend très pieusement hommage, au nom du Collège de France, la maison de Bude, à l'Université d'Oxford, la maison de Bentley. En cet esprit, le médiéviste que je suis vénère cette bibliothèque bodléienne où, tout jeune, jadis, il a travaillé, le sanctuaire des Douce et des Digby. Et le Français que je suis, père de deux soldats de la République et maître de tant de jeunes Français qui dans la grande guerre ont offert ou donné leur vie, salue avec respect les étudiants d'Oxford, tant de jeunes Anglais qui, comme eux, ont offert ou donné leur vie et qui méritent qu'à jamais on redise d'eux ce que M. Lloyd George disait des combattants de Verdun,

[1] Voir E. Renan, *Lettre à un ami d'Allemagne*, 1879.
[2] Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, chapitre V.

qu' 'ils ont sauvé non seulement la France, mais notre grande cause commune et l'humanité tout entière'.[1]

* * *

Pour répondre à l'honneur de votre appel, que peut un érudit vieilli dans l'étude du moyen âge ? Ah ! je me souviendrai que je suis au pays de Richard Cœur de Lion et du Prince Noir, de Chaucer et de Malory, au pays qui entre tous a célébré la chevalerie,

> the chivalry
> That dares the right, and disregards alike
> The yea and nay of the world ;

et, tout inégal que je me sache à mon entreprise, mon sujet du moins ne sera pas indigne de votre audience, si je vous transporte durant cette heure dans la vieille France, aux jours où se développèrent chez elle les formes classiques de la chevalerie. C'est aux alentours de l'an 1100, au moment de la première croisade.

Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait, dans le passé français, une date plus radieuse. Le grand fait d'histoire, à jamais honorable, c'est qu'alors, dans la courte période qui va de l'an 1080 environ à l'an 1130 environ, se dévoilèrent en France, contemporains les uns des autres ou presque, plusieurs grands poètes, un Thibaut de Vernon et la *Chanson de saint Alexis*, un Aubri de Besançon et le *Roman d'Alexandre*, un Richard le Pèlerin et la *Chanson d'Antioche*, un Guillaume IX de Poitiers et l'art des troubadours, et, bientôt après, l'auteur, qui doit tant à M. Paul Studer, du drame d'*Adam*, et Wace, et Benoît de Sainte-Maure, c'est-à-dire, en ce court laps d'un demi-siècle, les formes principales du roman, la poésie religieuse et la poésie amoureuse, et l'historiographie, et

[1] Discours prononcé dans la citadelle de Verdun.

le théâtre, une littérature, en un mot, presque aussi diversement organisée que celle des Latins et des Grecs, à peu près tous les genres littéraires qu'avaient connus les anciens, mais renaissant sous des aspects nouveaux, les aspects chrétiens, et tous ces genres représentés d'emblée par des chefs-d'œuvre. Le grand fait est que, dans le même temps où la fondation des ordres nouveaux, Fontevrault, Cîteaux, Prémontré, témoignait de l'ardeur religieuse de la France, dans le même temps où les maîtres des écoles parisiennes et chartraines, un Roscelin, un Abélard, un Guillaume de Champeaux, l'éveillaient à la haute culture philosophique, elle sut aussi, la France des premières croisades, par-dessus la diversité de ses dialectes et de ses patois, constituer cette belle chose, une langue littéraire, et une littérature nationale assez particulière dès l'origine pour que nous y reconnaissions, qualités et défauts, les traits distinctifs de son génie, assez généralement humaine pourtant pour que les nations cultivées, et l'Angleterre entre toutes, s'en soient éprises et inspirées. Oui, durant cette courte période de cinquante années, 'la France capétienne, comme l'Athènes de Périclès, a créé pour tous les peuples', et, pour le faire voir, une seule phrase suffira, si j'y rassemble les éblouissants synchronismes que voici : c'est alors, aux alentours de l'an 1100, qu'apparaissent, comme tumultuairement, la première croisade — et encore le premier arc d'ogive — et encore le premier vitrail — et encore le premier drame liturgique — et encore le premier tournoi — et encore la première charte de liberté d'une commune — et encore le premier chant du premier troubadour : toutes créations inattendues, jaillies à la fois du sol de la France.

J'ajoute : c'est alors qu'apparaît aussi la première chanson de geste. Sous l'influence de l'exaltation

religieuse et belliqueuse des croisades, à la faveur des pèlerinages lointains de Rome et de Compostelle, d'humbles traditions locales de nos églises, la légende de Charlemagne à Saint-Denis, de saint Roland à Blaye, de saint Guillaume à Gellone, de saint Ogier à Meaux, de tant d'autres personnages carolingiens en tant d'autres sanctuaires, prennent soudain une valeur neuve. Des jongleurs nomades les racontent, les chantent au son des vielles sur le parvis des églises, sur les champs de foires, aux étapes des pèlerins et des croisés, peu à peu les relient entre elles par le lien réel de leurs itinéraires et par le lien mystique d'une idée : l'idée que Dieu avait jadis choisi Charlemagne et ses Français pour être les champions de ses causes et mener en son nom par les pays une incessante guerre sainte et que la mission qu'il leur avait alors confiée n'avait été que l'ébauche et la préfiguration de la mission que la France des croisades devait à son tour reprendre et accomplir. C'est l'idée de la plus ancienne chanson de geste que nous ayons, la *Chanson de Roland*, qui groupe autour du vieil empereur, chevalier de Dieu, un peuple de chevaliers de Dieu ; c'est l'idée de tant d'autres romans qui, au XII^e^, au XIII^e^ siècle, exaltent les vertus de loyauté, de désintéressement, de fidélité, qui répètent que ' droite justice vaut bonne prière ', qui enseignent, comme l Église, le sacrifice, qui sont fondés, comme la tragédie cornélienne, sur l'honneur, et qui reflètent comme de purs miroirs les sentiments et les passions, l'esprit de l'époque féodale.

Et parce que j'ai choisi, pour y vivre le meilleur de ma vie d'érudit, cette époque, et dans cette époque, pour les étudier de préférence, les chansons de geste, et parmi les chansons de geste, pour lui consacrer le plus de travail, la *Chanson de Roland*, je crois bien faire de choisir, pour les analyser devant vous, entre tant de

scènes complexes de ce complexe poème, celles où resplendit surtout, d'une splendeur d'ailleurs étrange et mystérieuse, la chevalerie de Roland.

* * *

J'irai droit à ces scènes-là, car cette heure est brève, et d'ailleurs il suffit de quelques mots pour résumer celles qui les préparent. Au terme de la longue guerre que durant 'sept ans tout pleins' il a menée en Espagne, le roi Charlemagne vient de conclure avec le roi sarrasin Marsile une paix qu'il croit durable. Il ramène vers la France ses troupes victorieuses. Pour les garer contre tout retour offensif d'un ennemi soumis de la veille, il doit, quand elles franchiront les Pyrénées, laisser derrière elles, à Roncevaux, une arrière-garde. Roland a réclamé de lui l'honneur de la commander. Qui est Roland? Un chevalier, son neveu, jeune, beau, fort, qui, dans l'immense armée du vieux roi, semble entre tous proche de son cœur. C'est lui, nous est-il dit, qui 'guide les autres' dans les batailles, lui qui conquiert les royaumes, lui qui 'chascun jur de mort s'abandonet', et, s'il périssait, Charles perdrait 'le bras droit de son corps'. D'où lui vient donc son prestige, sa précellence? Serait-ce de sa vaillance, de sa pureté? Mais tous ses compagnons sont, eux aussi, des vaillants et des purs. Serait-ce de sa terrible épée, Durendal? Mais Durendal est une épée sainte, non pas une épée enchantée; elle n'est rien que le symbole matériel de la valeur de qui la manie. Serait-ce de sa tendresse pour le roi, son seigneur? Mais ses compagnons l'aiment du même cœur. Il semble que, dans cette armée de chevaliers unanimes, pareillement dévoués à une même cause, Roland ne fasse que porter à leur paroxysme les vertus des autres, qu'il se distingue des autres seulement par

une sorte d'ardeur impérieuse, d'outrance, que ses amis appellent sa prouesse, que ses ennemis appellent son orgueil.

Voici donc qu'à Roncevaux, au pied des Pyrénées, il vient de réclamer l'honneur de rester à l'arrière-garde. Et voici que d'un même élan, Olivier, son compagnon, puis les dix autres pairs, puis Turpin l'archevêque, puis vingt mille Français, la fleur de France, se sont offerts à rester avec lui. Or nous savons que leur troupe sera attaquée par une armée sarrasine plus forte, qu'un traître, Ganelon, a conduite et cachée dans les gorges voisines. Et ce qui fait le pathétique de la situation, c'est que Roland et ses vingt mille volontaires pressentent leur péril, l'ont à demi deviné, et que pourtant des raisons de fierté, d'honneur, qu'il serait trop long d'analyser, mais qui sont justes et invincibles, les ont décidés à s'offrir à la redoutable mission, ont décidé Charlemagne à consentir.

Charlemagne, malgré ses pressentiments, s'est éloigné dans la montagne. Par la route du col de Cise, sa grande armée s'écoule vers la France. Gardant l'entrée de cette route, au pied des Ports, les vingt mille attendent. Les Sarrasins vont attaquer. Le poème ne sera-t-il donc que le récit d'une immense tuerie ? Comme des fauves acculés, ou comme des martyrs dans le cirque, les vingt mille n'auront-ils qu'à subir leur destinée ? Non, ils en sont les maîtres, autant que des personnages cornéliens. Car la route reste libre derrière eux : ils peuvent battre en retraite vers Charlemagne ou le rappeler, s'ils veulent, par un messager ou par la voix du cor.

Que feront-ils ? Roland, maître de rappeler Charlemagne, et invité à le rappeler, refusera mais pour des raisons inattendues, et qui sont bien propres, semble-t-il, à nous surprendre et à nous choquer, puisqu'elles

semblent absurdes à Olivier, son plus cher compagnon, son double. Écoutons-les tous deux :

'Mille trompettes sarrasines sonnent.[1] Le bruit est grand, les Français l'entendirent. Olivier dit: "Sire compagnon, il se peut que nous ayons affaire aux Sarrasins." Roland répond : "Ah! que Dieu nous l'octroie! Nous devons tenir ici, pour notre roi. Pour son seigneur, on doit souffrir toute détresse, et endurer les grands chauds et les grands froids, et perdre du cuir et du poil. Que chacun veille à y employer de grands coups, afin qu'on ne chante pas de nous une mauvaise chanson! Le tort est aux païens, aux chrétiens le droit. Jamais mauvais exemple ne viendra de moi . . ."

'Olivier est monté sur une hauteur.[2] Il voit à plein la terre d'Espagne et les Sarrasins, qui sont assemblés en si grande masse. Les heaumes aux gemmes serties d'or brillent, et les écus, et les hauberts safrés, et les épieux et les gonfanons fixés aux fers. Il ne peut dénombrer même les corps de bataille : ils sont tant qu'il n'en sait pas le compte. Au-dedans de lui-même il est grandement troublé. Le plus vite qu'il peut, il dévale de la hauteur, vient aux Français, leur raconte tout.

'Olivier dit : "J'ai vu les païens. Jamais homme sur terre n'en vit plus. Devant nous ils sont bien cent mille, l'écu au bras, le heaume lacé, le blanc haubert revêtu ; et, la hampe droite, luisent leurs épieux bruns. Vous aurez une bataille, telle qu'il n'en fut jamais. Seigneurs Français, que Dieu vous donne sa force! Tenez fermement, pour que nous ne soyons pas vaincus!" Les Français disent : "Honni soit qui s'enfuit! Au risque de mourir, pas un ne vous manquera."

'Olivier dit : "Les païens sont très forts ; et nos Français, ce me semble, sont bien peu. Roland, mon compagnon, ah ! sonnez votre cor. Charles l'entendra, et l'armée reviendra." Roland répond : "Ce serait faire comme un fou. En Douce France j'y perdrais mon renom. Sur l'heure je frapperai de Durendal de grands coups. Sa lame saignera jusqu'à l'or de la garde. Les félons païens sont venus aux Ports pour leur malheur. Je vous le jure, tous sont marqués pour la mort."

'"Roland, mon compagnon, sonnez l'olifant! Charles l'entendra, ramènera l'armée ; il nous secourra avec

[1] Vers 1004-1016. [2] Vers 1028–1097.

tous ses barons." Roland répond: "Ne plaise à Dieu que pour moi mes parents soient blâmés et que Douce France tombe dans le mépris! Je frapperai de Durendal à force, ma bonne épée que j'ai ceinte au côté. Vous en verrez la lame tout ensanglantée. Les félons païens se sont assemblés pour leur malheur. Je vous le jure, ils sont tous condamnés à la mort."

'"Roland, mon compagnon, sonnez votre olifant! Charles l'entendra, qui est au passage des Ports. Je vous le jure, les Français reviendront. — Ne plaise à Dieu", lui répond Roland, "qu'il soit jamais dit par nul homme vivant que pour des païens j'aie sonné mon cor. Jamais mes parents n'en auront le reproche. Quand je serai en la grande bataille, je frapperai mille coups et sept cents, et vous verrez l'acier de Durendal sanglant. Les Français sont hardis et frapperont vaillamment; ceux d'Espagne n'échapperont pas à la mort."

'Olivier dit: "Pourquoi vous blâmerait-on? J'ai vu les Sarrasins d'Espagne: les vaux et les monts en sont couverts, et les landes et toutes les plaines. Grandes sont les armées de cette gent maudite et bien petite notre troupe!" Roland répond: "Mon ardeur s'en accroît. Ne plaise à Dieu ni à ses anges qu'à cause de moi France perde de son prix! J'aime mieux mourir que choir dans la honte! Mieux nous frappons, mieux l'empereur nous aime."

'Roland est preux et Olivier est sage. Tous deux sont de courage merveilleux. Une fois qu'ils sont à cheval et en armes, jamais par peur de la mort ils n'esquiveront une bataille. Les deux comtes sont bons et leurs paroles hautes.'

L'étrange conflit! Lequel des deux a raison? Olivier, semble-t-il bien. Car en quel temps, en quel pays, quel capitaine, surpris par un ennemi trop nombreux, a jamais hésité à appeler du renfort? 'Pourquoi vous blâmerait-on? je ne sais pas,' a dit Olivier, justement. Faut-il croire que la soif du martyre, une fièvre d'ascétisme mystique possède Roland? Non pas; il tient à la vie, et à sa fiancée lointaine. Espère-t-il de Dieu un miracle? Pas davantage, et, s'il pense comme Jeanne: 'Œuvrez et Dieu œuvrera,' toujours est-il que pas une fois, tant

que dureront ses combats, il ne priera. Il n'a d'autres raisons de rebuter Olivier que celles-là même qu'il vient de dire, et, s'il n'en a pas d'autres, n'apparaît-il pas qu'il va sacrifier ses vingt mille compagnons à un point d'honneur de pure magnificence, et qu'il sera vingt mille fois leur assassin ? C'est qu'il est 'preux', dit le poète. Qu'est-ce donc que prouesse ? et ne serait-ce qu'orgueil ? que folie ?

Pourtant, et par contre, on sent bien qu'Olivier 'le sage', puisqu'il est homme de cœur, doit convenir avec Roland d'un principe au moins : en tout temps, en tout pays, une troupe se déshonore si elle appelle du renfort sans nécessité. Tout bien pesé, le différend du preux et du sage se réduit donc à répondre l'un oui, l'autre non, à cette question : 'Pouvons-nous remplir, à nous seuls, notre mission ? Pouvons-nous, sans crier à l'aide, remporter la victoire ?'

Or, vous l'avez entendu : c'est la victoire que par trois fois Roland a prédite et promise. Qu'il commence donc la bataille : c'est son devoir certain. Mais, à tout instant, il peut se dédire : et, s'il n'est pas un aliéné, l'instant viendra, que nous guettons, où il se dédira . . . ou bien, c'est qu'il sera vainqueur.

* * *

Le poète divise la journée de Roncevaux en trois batailles, très diversement belles.

La première est tout ardeur et toute joie. L'archevêque Turpin promet aux vingt mille la gloire céleste, s'ils meurent, mais Roland leur promet autre chose, le triomphe terrestre ; il repousse comme une pensée de couard l'idée qu'il pourrait être défait :

1107. Mal seit del coer ki el piz se cuardet !
Nus remeindrum en estal en la place :
Par nos i ert e li colps e li caples !

Il promet à ses Français la ruine de l'ennemi, les dépouilles sarrasines, un butin 'bel et gent':

1168. Nuls reis de France n'out unkes si vaillant.

Et telle est, en effet, la vertu du cri d'armes: 'Montjoie!', et telle la fougue des chevaliers, et telle la gaîté de la lutte sous le soleil clair, que bientôt Roland semble avoir prédit juste. Les vingt mille ne pensent plus qu'au riche butin escompté, tous, jusqu'au sage Olivier lui-même, qui s'écrie:

1233. Ferez i, Francs, kar trés ben les veintrum . . .

1274. Dist Oliver: 'Gente est notre bataille!'

Cette bataille est gagnée, en effet. Hélas! Une seconde armée sarrasine entre en lice. Les exploits des épées fières, Durendal, Hauteclere, Almice, se multiplient. Vainement. Cette fois, les Français meurent 'par milliers, par troupeaux . . .' A mesure qu'ils tombent, Charlemagne s'éloigne et notre espoir décroît que, si même on le rappelle, il puisse désormais revenir à temps. N'est-il pas trop tard déjà? Certes, trop tard, et, pour que nous le sachions bien, le poète, jouant le franc jeu, décrit les signes funestes qui, loin du champ de carnage, là-bas en France, présagent le désastre:

'La bataille est merveilleuse et pesante . . .[1] Les Français y perdent leurs meilleurs soutiens. Ils ne reverront plus leurs pères ni leurs parents, ni Charlemagne qui les attend aux Ports. En France, s'élève une tourmente étrange, un orage chargé de tonnerre et de vent, de pluie et de grêle, démesurément. La foudre tombe à coups serrés et pressés, la terre tremble. De Saint-Michel-du-Péril jusqu'aux Saints, de Besançon jusqu'au port de Wissant, il n'y a maison dont un mur ne crève. En plein midi il y a de grandes ténèbres: aucune clarté, sauf quand le ciel se fend. Nul ne le

[1] Vers 1412-1420-1437.

voit qui ne s'épouvante. Plusieurs disent : "C'est la consommation des temps, la fin du monde que voici venue". Ils ne savent pas, ils ne disent pas vrai : c'est la grande douleur pour la mort de Roland.'

Mais eux, les combattants, qui ne voient pas ces présages, en seraient-ils encore à espérer leur salut ? Il n'en est rien. Olivier désormais s'enferme dans un mutisme hautain. Turpin, pour la seconde fois, harangue les chevaliers : mais c'est pour leur annoncer (v. 1520) que pas un d'eux ne survivra. Il n'est plus question pour eux de vaincre, mais seulement de bien mourir. Et Roland ? Lui qui peut encore sauver les restes de cette noble troupe, est-il entendu qu'il ne veut pas ? Serait-il seul à ne pas voir ? Non : lui aussi, il voit, il sait. Cherchez, en effet, dans le récit de cette seconde bataille, son propos favori de naguère, qu'il était sûr de vaincre, vous le chercherez en vain. Pourtant, il parle plusieurs fois dans la mêlée, et c'est pour rappeler les mêmes arguments qu'il employait tout à l'heure.

1466. ' Male chançun n'en deit estre cantee . . .'

1560. ' Pur itels colps nos ad Charles plus cher.'

Il les répète tous, hormis le seul qui, au début, les justifiait, la promesse de la victoire.

C'en est donc fait. Il a descendu la pente terrible. De sa foi en son invincibilité, de la surestime de soi-même, il a passé peu à peu à l'inquiétude, à l'angoisse ; à son tour, il voit la défaite certaine : et c'est quand le roi Marsile lance une troisième armée pour achever ceux que Dieu a épargnés. A cet instant, quand s'engage la troisième bataille, combien sont-ils qui survivent ? Soixante seulement. Roland, nous le savons, n'a plus qu'à les regarder mourir, comme il a regardé les autres. Par insensibilité ? par démence ? On ne sait. Pourtant comme nous n'avons plus rien à espérer,

croyons-nous, sinon l'achèvement, aussi rapide que possible, de l'affreux holocauste, voici que Roland s'approche d'Olivier, cherchant à dire une chose qu'il ne sait comment dire: 'Nous avons bien sujet de plaindre douce France, la belle. . . . Pourquoi le roi Charles n'est-il pas ici? . . .' Olivier le laisse parler, feint de ne pas comprendre . . . 'Comment pourrions-nous faire?' reprend Roland. A cet instant où il laisse enfin voir qu'il souffre, et comme il trébuche, lui aussi, sous le faix de sa croix, pitié nous prend de lui . . . Si je rappelais Charlemagne?' demande-t-il humblement, follement. Mais il lui reste à toucher le fond de sa détresse, et c'est quand Olivier, son compagnon, son frère, reprend à son compte, ironique, méprisant, les arguments dont Roland lui-même se prévalait tout à l'heure et les retourne contre le malheureux:

'"Ah!" dit Roland,[1] "roi, ami, que n'êtes-vous ici? Olivier, frère, comment pourrons-nous faire? Comment lui mander la nouvelle?" — Olivier dit: "Comment? Je ne sais pas. Un récit honteux pourrait courir sur nous, j'aime mieux mourir."

'Roland dit: "Je sonnerai l'olifant. Charles l'entendra, qui passe les Ports. Je vous le jure, les Francs reviendront." Olivier dit: "Ce serait grand déshonneur et pour tous vos parents un opprobre, et cette honte serait sur eux toute leur vie. Quand je vous le demandais, vous n'en fîtes rien. Faites-le maintenant: ce ne sera plus par mon conseil. Sonner votre cor, ce ne serait pas d'un vaillant. Comme vos deux bras sont sanglants!" Le comte répond: "J'ai frappé de beaux coups."

'Roland dit: "Notre bataille est rude. Je sonnerai mon cor, le roi Charles l'entendra." Olivier dit: "Ce ne serait pas d'un preux. Quand je vous disais de le faire, compagnon, vous n'avez pas daigné. Si le roi avait été avec nous, nous n'eussions rien souffert. Ceux qui gisent là ne méritent aucun blâme. Par cette mienne barbe, si je puis revoir ma gente sœur Aude, vous ne coucherez jamais entre ses bras."

[1] Vers 1697-1736.

'Roland dit: "Pourquoi de la colère contre moi?" Et il répond: "Compagnon, c'est votre faute; car vaillance sensée et folie sont deux choses, et mesure vaut mieux qu'outrecuidance. Si nos Français sont morts, c'est par votre légèreté. Jamais plus nous ne ferons le service de Charles. Si vous m'aviez cru, mon seigneur serait revenu; cette bataille, nous l'aurions gagnée; le roi Marsile aurait été tué ou pris. Votre prouesse, Roland, c'est à la malheure que nous l'avons vue. Charles, le Grand — jamais il n'y aura un tel homme jusqu'au dernier jugement — ne recevra plus notre aide. Vous allez mourir et France en sera honnie. Aujourd'hui prend fin notre loyal compagnonnage. Avant ce soir nous nous séparerons, et ce sera dur."'

Olivier a soulagé sa rancune. Roland, que fera-t-il? A ces reproches si violents, et si tendres, et qui lui viennent de son plus cher compagnon, que répondra-t-il? Va-t-il réfuter Olivier? ou, s'il ressent du remords, va-t-il confesser enfin ce remords? Il se tait, et je ne sais rien de plus beau que ce silence. Il se tait, mais l'archevêque Turpin a entendu la querelle des deux amis; et, poussant son cheval vers eux: 'Hélas!' leur dit-il, 'elle n'a plus d'objet. Pourtant, sire Roland, oui, sonnez l'olifant, afin que du moins le roi revienne et nous venge et que nos corps ne soient pas mangés des loups, des sangliers et des chiens.' Roland répond: 'Seigneur, vous avez bien dit.'

'Roland[1] a mis l'olifant à ses lèvres. Il l'embouche bien, sonne à pleine force. Hauts sont les monts et longue la voix du cor: à trente lieues on l'entend qui se prolonge. Charles l'entend et l'entendent tous ses corps de troupe. Le roi dit: "Nos hommes livrent bataille." Et Ganelon lui répond à l'encontre: "Qu'un autre l'eût dit, certes on y verrait un grand mensonge!"

'Le comte Roland, à grand effort, à grand ahan, très douloureusement sonne son olifant. Par sa bouche le sang jaillit clair. Sa tempe se rompt. La voix de son

[1] Vers 1753 et suivants.

cor se répand au loin. Charles l'entend, au passage des Ports. Le duc Naime écoute, les Francs écoutent . . . "Le comte Roland a la bouche sanglante. Sa tempe s'est rompue. Il sonne douloureusement, à grand'peine . . ."'

Sa souffrance le justifie. Essayant d'interpréter cette scène, jadis, dans mes *Légendes épiques*,[1] j'avais écrit ceci : 'Pour tous ceux d'ailleurs qui aux siècles lointains ont entendu chanter la *Chanson de Roland*, pour tous ses lecteurs modernes, plus ou moins obscurément, la justification de Roland a commencé plus tôt, s'il est vrai que c'est la vaillance et la mort de ses compagnons qui le justifie progressivement, et qu'à mesure qu'il en mourait davantage, nous avons souhaité davantage que Roland n'appelât point. Les vingt mille ont combattu, sont morts sans jamais dire s'ils étaient du parti de Roland ou du parti d'Olivier, et peut-être tous ont-ils pensé ainsi qu'Olivier et tous se sont pourtant offerts à la mort comme s'ils pensaient ainsi que Roland. Roland leur devait cette mort, puisqu'ils en étaient dignes . . . Au début, Roland, étant Roland, étant celui qui s'élève d'emblée, non à la conception, mais à la passion de son devoir, ne pouvait pas appeler ; plus tard, à mesure qu'il élevait ses compagnons aussi haut que lui, il ne devait pas appeler.'

Aujourd'hui, pour avoir observé pendant les quatre années de la guerre les choses que j'ai observées, sachant mieux qu'un chef est sans force, qu'une troupe est sans force s'il ne s'établit du chef à la troupe et de la troupe au chef un courant double et continu de pensées et de sentiments bien accordés, je ressens l'insuffisance de cette analyse et combien il était faux de dire que Roland élève progressivement ses compagnons jusqu'à lui. Il

[1] Tome III, page 439.

faut bien sentir au contraire qu'ils sont dignes de lui, et Olivier tout le premier, dès le début de la bataille, et que cette équivalence morale remonte à des jours et à des années en arrière. Comme Roland, depuis des jours et des années, ils sont ceux qui aspirent au parfait. Ses victoires passées furent leurs victoires ; son 'orgueil' est fait de leur orgueil, sa 'folie' est leur folie. Il ne s'est jamais distingué d'eux en rien, sinon par le don, qui est son propre, de discerner avant eux, par une intuition plus immédiate, par une illumination plus claire, ce qu'ils veulent. A son insu, à leur insu, il incarne leur volonté profonde. A Roncevaux, son privilège de chef, de héros, de saint, est seulement de voir au delà, d'apercevoir d'emblée l'œuvre comme nécessairement accomplie, la victoire comme nécessairement remportée.

La victoire, qu'il avait prédite à une heure où sa prédiction semblait d'un fou, et dont lui-même a fini par désespérer, puisqu'il sonne du cor en sa détresse, absurdement, quand il est trop tard, la victoire, il l'atteint au moment même où il en désespère. Il l'atteint, puisque le roi sarrasin s'enfuit, le poing coupé, puisque bientôt les dernières troupes sarrasines s'enfuiront. La victoire, les deux derniers survivants de ses compagnons, Olivier et Turpin, auront le temps de l'entrevoir :

2183. Cist camp est vostre, mercit Deu, e mien,

lui dira Turpin, avant de succomber. Et lui-même, qui va mourir à son tour sur ce champ qui est sien, il contemplera la victoire, il jouira d'elle délicieusement au milieu des affres de sa passion de martyr :

'Roland sent que sa mort est prochaine.[1] Par les oreilles sa cervelle se répand. Il prie Dieu pour ses

[1] Vers 2259-2397.

pairs, afin qu'il les appelle ; puis, pour lui-même, il prie l'ange Gabriel. Il prend l'olifant, pour que personne ne lui fasse reproche, et Durendal, son épée, en l'autre main. Un peu plus loin qu'une portée d'arbalète, vers l'Espagne, il va, dans un guéret. Il monte sur un tertre. Là, sous un bel arbre, il y a quatre perrons, faits de marbre. Sur l'herbe verte, il est tombé à la renverse. Il se pâme, car sa mort approche.

'Hauts sont les monts, hauts sont les arbres. Il y a là quatre perrons, faits de marbre, qui luisent. Sur l'herbe verte, le comte Roland se pâme. Or un Sarrasin le guette, qui a contrefait le mort et gît parmi les autres, ayant souillé son corps et son visage de sang. Il se redresse debout, accourt. Il était beau et fort, et de grande vaillance ; en son orgueil il fait la folie dont il mourra : il se saisit de Roland, de son corps et de ses armes, et dit une parole : "Il est vaincu, le neveu de Charles ! Cette épée, je l'emporterai en Arabie !" Comme il tirait, le comte reprit un peu ses sens.

'Roland sent qu'il lui prend son épée. Il ouvre les yeux, et lui dit un mot : "Tu n'es pas des nôtres, que je sache !" Il tenait l'olifant, qu'il n'a pas voulu perdre. Il l'en frappe sur son heaume gemmé, paré d'or ; il brise l'acier, et le crâne, et les os, lui fait jaillir du chef les deux yeux et, devant ses pieds, le renverse mort. Après il lui dit : "Païen, fils de serf, comment fus-tu si osé que de te saisir de moi, soit à droit, soit à tort ? Nul ne l'entendra dire qui ne te tienne pour un fou ! Voilà fendu le pavillon de mon olifant ; l'or en est tombé, et le cristal.'

'Roland sent que sa vue se perd. Il se met sur pieds, tant qu'il peut s'évertue. Son visage a perdu sa couleur. Devant lui est une pierre bise. Il y frappe dix coups, plein de deuil et de rancœur. L'acier grince, il ne se brise ni ne s'ébrèche. "Ah ! dit le comte, sainte Marie, à mon aide ! Ah ! Durendal, bonne Durendal, c'est pitié de vous ! Puisque je meurs, je n'ai plus cure de vous. Par vous j'ai gagné en rase campagne tant de batailles, et par vous dompté tant de larges terres, que Charles tient, qui a la barbe chenue ! Ne venez jamais aux mains d'un homme qui puisse fuir devant un autre ! Un bon vassal vous a longtemps tenue : il n'y aura jamais votre pareille en France la Sainte."

'Roland frappe au perron de sardoine : l'acier grince, il n'éclate pas, il ne s'ébrèche pas. Quand il voit qu'il ne peut la briser, il commence en lui-même à la plaindre : "Ah ! Durendal, comme tu es belle, et claire, et blanche ! Contre le soleil comme tu luis et flambes ! Charles était aux vaux de Maurienne quand du ciel Dieu lui manda par son ange qu'il te donnât à l'un de ses comtes capitaines : alors il m'en ceignit, le gentil roi, le Magne. Par elle, je lui conquis l'Anjou et la Bretagne, par elle je lui conquis le Poitou et le Maine. Je lui conquis Normandie la franche, et par elle je lui conquis la Provence et l'Aquitaine, et la Lombardie et toute la Romagne. Je lui conquis la Bavière et toutes les Flandres, la Bourgogne et la Pologne entière, Constantinople, dont il avait reçu l'hommage, et la Saxe, où il fait ce qu'il veut. Par elle je lui conquis l'Écosse . . . et l'Angleterre, sa chambre, comme il l'appelait. Par elle je conquis tant et tant de contrées, que Charles tient, qui a la barbe blanche. Pour cette épée j'ai douleur et peine. Plutôt mourir que la laisser aux païens ! Dieu, notre père, ne souffrez pas que France ait cette honte ! "

'Roland frappa contre une pierre bise. Il en abat plus que je ne vous sais dire. L'épée grince, elle n'éclate ni ne se rompt. Vers le ciel elle rebondit. Quand le comte voit qu'il ne la brisera point, il la plaint en lui-même très doucement : "Ah ! Durendal, que tu es belle et sainte ! Ton pommeau d'or est plein de reliques : une dent de saint Pierre, du sang de saint Basile, et des cheveux de monseigneur saint Denis, et du vêtement de sainte Marie. Il n'est pas juste que des païens te possèdent : des chrétiens doivent faire votre service. Puissiez-vous ne jamais tomber aux mains d'un couard ! Par vous j'aurai conquis tant de larges terres, que tient Charles, qui a la barbe fleurie ! L'empereur en est puissant et riche."

'Roland sent que la mort le prend tout : de sa tête elle descend vers son cœur. Jusque sous un pin il va courant ; il s'est couché sur l'herbe verte, face contre terre. Sous lui il met son épée et l'olifant. Il a tourné sa tête du côté de la gent païenne : il a fait ainsi, voulant que Charles dise, et tous les siens, qu'il est mort en vainqueur, le gentil comte. A faibles coups et souvent, il bat sa coulpe. Pour ses péchés il tend vers Dieu son gant.

'Roland sent que son temps est fini. Il est couché sur un tertre escarpé, le visage tourné vers l'Espagne. De l'une de ses mains il frappe sa poitrine: "Dieu, par ta grâce, *mea culpa*, pour mes péchés, les grands et les menus, que j'ai faits depuis l'heure où je naquis jusqu'à ce jour où me voici abattu." Il a tendu vers Dieu son gant droit. Les anges du ciel descendent à lui.

'Le comte Roland est couché sous un pin. Vers l'Espagne il a tourné son visage. De maintes choses il lui vient souvenance: de tant de terres qu'il a conquises, le vaillant, de Douce France, des hommes de son lignage, de Charlemagne, son seigneur, qui l'a nourri. Il en pleure et soupire, il ne peut s'en empêcher. Mais il ne veut pas se mettre lui-même en oubli; il bat sa coulpe et demande à Dieu merci: "Vrai Père, qui jamais ne mentis, toi qui rappelas saint Lazare d'entre les morts, qui sauvas Daniel des lions, sauve mon âme de tous périls, pour les péchés que j'ai faits dans ma vie!" Il a offert à Dieu son gant droit: saint Gabriel l'a pris de sa main. Sur son bras il a laissé retomber sa tête: il est allé, les mains jointes, à sa fin. Dieu lui envoie son ange Chérubin et saint Michel du Péril; avec eux y vient saint Gabriel. Ils portent l'âme du comte en paradis.

'Roland est mort: Dieu a son âme dans les cieux.'

Le roi Charles est revenu à Roncevaux. Il voit le champ de gloire tout couvert de morts, bientôt fleuri des fleurs sacrées 'ki sunt vermeilles del sanc de noz barons'.[1] Va-t-il prononcer contre Roland le terrible *Vare, redde legiones*? Non, mais il loue le victorieux, et tous ses compagnons avec lui, et les vénère.

1093. Rollant est proz e Oliver est sage;
Ambedui unt meveillus vasselage . . .
Bon sunt li cunte e lur paroles haltes.

Entre le 'preux' et le 'sage', faut-il choisir? Rappelons-nous plutôt cette parole de Pascal: 'Dieu a voulu que les vérités entrent du cœur dans l'esprit et non pas de l'esprit dans le cœur. . . . Et de là vient qu'au lieu

[1] Vers 2872.

qu'en parlant des choses humaines on dit qu'il faut les connaître avant que de les aimer, les saints au contraire disent, en parlant des choses divines, qu'il faut les aimer pour les connaître et qu'on n'entre dans la vérité que par la charité.' Apprendre à aimer son propre sacrifice, n'est-ce pas une de ces choses divines? Et quelle doit être la juste limite de cet amour? Ceux-là le savent qui, dans la dernière guerre — la dernière des guerres—se sont offerts, les uns selon l'esprit du grand vers de Corneille :

'Faites votre devoir et laissez faire aux dieux,'

les autres, selon l'esprit du grand vers de Pope :

'Act well your part, there all the honour lies.'

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PREFACE

THIS lecture, one of a series of discourses planned by Mr. Gordon of Magdalen College, was delivered in the Examination Schools at Oxford during the Summer Term of 1912. It is not for me to appraise its value, but those who remember Charles will feel that it rings true to his nature, and is in fact what they would have expected him to say. Charles knew Petrarch as an expert pupil of Rutherford of Westminster would be trained to know a Classic, and had he lived to carry out an intention, of which he would sometimes speak, of editing the Latin works of the Archdeacon of Padua, the task would have been accomplished once and for all. *Res severa est magnum gaudium.* The pleasant wit and human touch of this lecture must not blind us to the exact and scrupulous learning which lie beyond. Charles delighted in fine literature and in all the good things of human intercourse, but in scholarship his standard was severe, and he would come down upon slipshod work like a hammer. A touch of weakness or pretence would provoke a snort of disgust or a loud peal of laughter.

Though his manhood was passed for the most part in a college, nobody can ever have thought of Charles as a scholar or a don, or indeed as belonging

to any established class or category. He was too big a man to be classed, and whatever profession or calling one might think of as specially suitable to him seemed, on second thoughts, to be like a suit of clothes at least a size too small. He has given us the best text of the Annals and Histories of Tacitus, but all this was so infinitesimal a part of him that nine-tenths of his friends were probably unaware that he had achieved anything notable in scholarship or that he stood high in the esteem of learned men.

He was full of merriment and vigour, broad in his sympathies, quick and subtle in his moods, a poet and a scholar, no doubt, but primarily designed for action and to lead men. It was good to hear his great laugh or to see him stride to the wicket with bared head.

But though he played for Oxford and Sussex, he never lost his balance about games, and after two seasons of first-class cricket, which he did not greatly enjoy, he gave up three-day matches and contented himself with an occasional game in term time, a cricket week at a friend's house or a fortnight's tour with the Authentics in the summer. Games were made to be enjoyed, and Charles did not much care how he played them so long as they were enjoyable. His capacity for enjoyment was like a mountain spring. All the simple things of nature—the wind, the sun, the scent of grass, the many graces of the valley and the wide air-washed solitude of the hills—filled him with unspeakable delight. He seemed made for a life in the open.

In Christ Church, where for many years he was Senior Censor, and responsible for the discipline of the College, influence came to him without effort or seeking. He could do what he chose because every one liked him to do it. Undergraduates, who rarely err in their judgement of character, felt his strength and wisdom, and were glad to follow his downright counsels. He on his side asked nothing of others that was costly or intricate, but found friendships wherever there was manly strength or a simple thread of sincere purpose. None of the ordinary barriers which delimit friendships existed for him. Athletes and exquisites, scholars and dunces townsfolk and country-folk, old men, schoolboys, and children, every type of undergraduate not hollow or unwholesome, came within the range of his capacious sympathies. He felt immediately whether he liked a man or a woman, and if he liked them and knew them well, they were pretty certain before long to be involved in an atmosphere of whimsical and affectionate banter.

The fussiness of a learned Academy vexed rather than amused him, for his own affairs were always quietly and quickly managed. In conversation he was refreshingly laconic and watchful for the point of humour, but I suspect that few, enjoying his entertaining commentary on men and things, realized his depth of feeling and the full measure of his delicate and fastidious pride.

When war broke out Charles was over age, and

moreover disabled from active combatant service by the medical regulations then in force. Inaction however was impossible for him, and offering himself for the work which would most quickly bring him to the front, he crossed the Channel in the autumn of 1914 as an orderly in a British Red Cross Motor Convoy. Then at last, in the grim winter campaign in Flanders, his foresight, coolness, and great practical gifts had their full chance. Specially selected to remain at Ypres with ten ambulances when the remainder of his convoy was removed to a place of greater safety, he worked all through the second battle of Ypres, always the first to dash through the narrow Menin Gate in the darkness, and the last to return along that shell-swept road. One night his companions only knew that he had 'disappeared'. It was discovered that he had joined the stretcher-bearers at Hill 60, and had been tending the wounded in the trenches.

Nobody who has lived amid the havoc of war cares to spin talk from his experience, and of his own doings Charles would say little or nothing; but occasionally an incident would slip out, as that he had carried one of the heaviest men of the army out of action on his back, and had spent the whole of a wet night searching for a missing comrade.

In the summer of 1915, Charles felt that his work in Flanders had come to a standstill. He had no commission, and it was a strain upon him to continue in a non-combatant service. Openings were offered

him on land and sea—a commission in the Grenadiers, another in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve; but since the Army would have entailed a relatively long period of training in England, whereas the Navy meant immediate active service, he chose the Navy, and, after a short course of instruction at Whale Island, joined (Sept. 6, 1915) the battle cruiser *Invincible*, Captain Arthur L. Cay, flying the flag of Admiral Hood.

He was very soon given responsible work, the command of a division of seamen, and an important duty in fire control, and was allowed to take his turn as Officer of the Watch. 'His Captain told me', writes my brother William, Captain of H.M.S. *St. Vincent*, 'how readily and effectively he took up these new duties, and that he was quite at home and self-reliant in any circumstance and in any weather.' And here is an impression of him given to me by a friend who only met him but a week before the Jutland battle. 'It was to the *Invincible*', writes Mr. A. H. Pollen, 'that we went to tea before leaving the Fleet. He was officer of the watch—almost the first person one saw on board. I knew he would be there and realized at once who he was. There was the family likeness; and an unmistakable blend of intellect, learning, open-air activity, obvious authority and natural command. His was a very striking appearance—features cast in a large mould; in figure tall, strongly but loosely built. It was easy to recognize the old Blue and the county

cricketer. On board ship you expect officers and men to be hard, athletic and alert. One was intrigued by Fisher from knowing that he was a great scholar; certainly a great don. It must have been this that made one almost surprised to hear that he was far on towards being a first-class naval officer as well. . . . When you knew, there was no room for surprise. There was no question of his being a priceless messmate: the testimony on this point was overwhelming. It could not, of course, have been otherwise—he being what he was, and a wardroom, especially in war time, being what it must be. The "Invincibles" were fully awake to the luxury of his presence. My visit was quite short. There were many to see and talk to, new friends as well as old; of all of them only one survives; so that every minute was memorable. Yet of all my recollections I am not sure that the picture of Charles Fisher—an almost Renaissance type—scholar, warrior, philosopher and seaman—is not now the most vivid. . . . What an aristocracy it is that the war has taken from us in the last two years! And we hardly knew what we had until we lost it.'

His powers were soon to be put to the supreme test. On May 31, 1916, the *Invincible*, leading the line of the Grand Fleet, became furiously engaged at close range with the German battle cruiser *Derfflinger*, a very heavy and powerful opponent. Charles was aloft, playing his part, and helping to control the fire of the *Invincible's* twelve-inch guns, and the *Derff-*

linger was seen to be repeatedly hit. At the end of half an hour's engagement, during which the *Invincible* had suffered little damage, a great explosion took place amidships, and the ship broke in two and sank on the 'Little Fisher Bank', her bow and stern rising high out of the water. As the *St. Vincent* swept by into action a little later, these evidences of the disaster were alone visible above the calm level of the sea. There was no floating spar or body. In truth, two officers and about a dozen men out of a crew of close on eight hundred were picked up alive. One of the surviving officers was close to Charles throughout the action, and records the cool judgement and intrepid spirit with which in that tremendous conflict he faced the critical duties of his post.

Il n'est pas mort,
Il est parti,
Il a forcé la porte de sa vie,
Il a franchi
D'un bond le seuil de son sort,
Il n'est pas mort,
Il est sorti
D'un monde qui était trop petit pour lui.

H. F.

PETRARCH

To speak adequately of Petrarch within one lecture is not easy. The history behind him is complex, the history in front of him unending, and in between he stands, to use his own words, 'totus in motu', all agog, 'hic atque alibi', here and there, 'et ita nusquam', and so nowhere: mediaeval if you like, or if you prefer to follow Renan, the first of the moderns; at any rate a figure of contradictions; as a rule, clear in his judgement of things, but tormented in his judgement of himself. And yet the niche which posterity has assigned him is clean and neat. He is the singer of Laura and the father of Humanism—'the trifles filled with the silly and offensive praise of women'—I translate his own appreciation—and written in the vulgar tongue, have won him one half of his glory; a movement, of which he was not wholly conscious, the other: that is how posterity, judging by results, has decided the matter.

But Petrarch himself took rather a different view of his achievements: leaving the vernacular to Dante, whom in that inferior branch he judged supreme, he based his own title, as poet, on his Latin verse; and had he been asked what service he had rendered

humanity at large, he would probably have pointed, not to his passionate advertisement of the ancient learning, but to the moral writings in Latin prose.

But for us the *Africa*, a long hexameter poem in nine books, is a faded pleasure. The hero is Scipio Africanus, and he, as Landor remarked, was the thunderbolt of war, and always left a barren place behind. Even Petrarch himself somehow had doubts of its value, and nearly burnt it, but remembering with gratitude the lucky escape of the *Aeneid* from the flames, he held his hand. All that can be said for the *Africa* now is that at the time of its writing it was much admired, and that some of it was once mistaken for the work of Silius Italicus. There is other Latin poetry as well, chiefly allegorical and pastoral, but that too has descended into the pit.

Of the Latin moral works, the longest and most elaborate is the *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*, a treatise on the dark side of blessings and the bright side of misfortunes. Its fate has been various. Between the years 1471–1756 it passed through twenty editions, and there exists not only an English, but also a Bohemian translation. But somehow the fashion ceased, and now, for all its entertainment, the *De Remediis*, like the *Africa*, remains unread. You will best be able to judge of its curious range when I tell you that it passes from the disadvantages of cherishing a hope in immortality to the disadvantages of keeping a monkey. The hope may be falsified ;

the monkey is 'an animal repulsive in appearance and gloomy in achievement'. And as for misfortune, if your wife is stolen from you, you have only got to remember that what has happened *once* to you happened twice to Menelaus.

It is a queer jumble, full of shrewd things and learned, but, as is clear from the use of Menelaus, beset with the mediaeval love for far-fetched exempla.

So we judge of Petrarch, and so Petrarch judged of himself, or perhaps I should rather say that so the evidence, especially as contained in his letter to posterity, suggests that he judged. But it is a mistake to be too positive. Often enough the formal pronouncements of Petrarch ran counter to his real inclination and counter to his practice. As Archdeacon of Padua, though 'fere semper absens', and Canon of Parma, he had an eye to appearances, and just as Scipio was safer than Laura, so too a moral treatise was more to be commended than a promiscuous search for the pagans. His friends were, many of them, clerical, his brother a Carthusian monk. They kept him up to the mark. Sometimes, however, he let slip that he was something rather different, modern rather than mediaeval, or like Giotto his friend the painter, whose pictures indeed were beautiful, but who had an ugly face.

Now what, apart from his own prim view, was the secret of Petrarch's success? We shall find materials for part of the answer by going to the Letters.

Allusion has just been made to a letter to the unborn; there are several letters to the dead as well, and, luckily for us, a vast body of letters to the living. The familiar letters fill three fat volumes in Fracasetti's edition; for the senile one still must go, as far as I know, to the blinding Basle edition of 1581. In style, these letters are nearer to Seneca than to Cicero, but not pedantically allied to either. The themes are various, but nothing comes amiss—invective and spiritual counsel, a description of the ruins of Rome, or his old Provençal housekeeper, with a face as dry as the Libyan desert—all fall equally into their place; and I think one may say that, apart from his pompous letters of consolation, there is little monotony, and there are few departures from a sensible taste. Many of the letters are fine, and some of them are witty. Unhappily, the letters of consolation are numerous: a son, for instance, is mourning for his mother. Petrarch immediately wades in with a long list of Roman mothers who have mourned for a son, and points out with gravity that, unless his memory deceives him, there are only one or two distinguished examples of sons who have mourned for a mother. It is remarkable that letters such as these were much appreciated, and it is a relief to turn to others of a different sort—for example, to that on the schoolmaster's profession: Zenobio, a Florentine friend, thinks of devoting his life to teaching; Petrarch warns him to look ahead:

'a sharp youth', he writes, 'is a beautiful sight; nothing is more hideous than an old schoolmaster; it is better to die a boy than to live, growing gradually old, among boyish things. I have two friends in Cisalpine Gaul, of distinguished talents, but they are crushed for ever by their lowly task'. Again, to return to the housekeeper,—'if Helen had looked like her, Troy would still be standing'.

In these letters Petrarch tells us many things about himself. As a youth at Avignon he regrets to say that he pinched his feet with little shoes, and was over-careful about his dress. He tells us also, quite truly, that his mind was level rather than powerful, nimble rather than acute. He also shows us the tremendous activity of his life. It is notorious that the elder Pliny read in his bath, but Petrarch apparently performed the more intricate operation of reading and even writing during a shave or a hair-cut. Six hours in bed sufficed. He could climb a mountain (St. Augustine in his pocket); he took a vigorous delight in everything. But, above all, his mind was level. Except at those moments when the old monastic views of salvation tugged the other way, he thought for himself, and in these free and liberal moods declared himself, in the words of Horace, 'unbound to swear to any master's rule'. There were signs of rebellion even in his youth. Like Boccaccio and Ariosto, he had been destined for a lawyer by his father, but at Montpellier he

preferred to read Cicero and at Bologna he preferred to listen to Cino da Pistoia on poetry. For the barren formalism of the law he had a lifelong contempt, and his hatred of scholastic philosophy was no less scathing. 'Aristotle', he said, 'is but a man, and any farmer or shepherd on the hill could give as true an account of happiness as he.' Cicero and Christ are really at one. And when a holy person frightened Boccaccio with a message saying that he had little time to live and must give up poetry, it was to Petrarch Boccaccio wrote; and Petrarch answered that though many unlettered men had attained to holiness, yet no man was ever debarred from holiness by letters. In one of his most defiant moods, he even confronts the luxurious priests with a verse of Persius, and asks the whole muster of them to give answer to a single pagan. These were brave utterances at that time, and brave, too, was his attack on the quack-doctors and astrologers. He hated shams. As a commentary on the time, it is well to remember that he was prosecuted as a wizard at the instigation of a Cardinal because he studied Virgil to excess.

But Petrarch brushed such things aside with a smile, or wrote a pamphlet according to mood. His eyes were mainly directed elsewhere, and his eyes were his own. It was to Rome he looked, a passionate exile at the barbarous Babylon of Avignon; and, as befitted a man of letters with a love for history, to the Rome which had produced the

great literature. 'Nowhere', he cried, 'is Rome less known than at Rome,' and he threw his whole heart into acquiring a free and unbiased knowledge. The mediaeval knowledge of the Classics was not unbiased. It is true that the learned men of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had gone to the Classics, but they had gone perversely. They employed them for their own purposes. They did not regard them as literature, or as illustrating a bygone life; they approached them in the spirit of advocates, and wrapped them in a decent veil of allegory. They liked the books which were useful, not the books which were good; the springs of Helicon were declared polluted, unless they could be converted into tributaries of the river Jordan. 'Because to-day, beloved,' I quote from a sermon of Honorius of Autun, a learned man of the twelfth century, 'we have laid aside the song of gladness and taken up the song of sadness, I would briefly tell you something from the books of the pagans, to show you how you should reject the melody of this world's pleasures, in order that hereafter with the angels you may make sweet harmonies in heaven: for one should pick up a gem found in dung and set it in a kingly ornament: even so, if we find anything profitable in pagan books, we should turn it into the building up of the Church, which is Christ's spouse.

That is the kind of thing; there was also wide and brutal ignorance and brutal neglect: 'if Livy

were to return to earth', says Petrarch, 'he would fail to recognize his work under the current text, and judge it to be the writing of some barbarian': there was a professor at Bologna who thought that Plato and Cicero were poets, and that Ennius and Statius were contemporaries; and the kind of etymology in vogue was that of Isidore of Seville, who derived 'agnus', a lamb, from the verb 'agnosco', I recognize, because a lamb recognizes its mother.

Now Petrarch rose superior to all this perversion, carelessness, and stupidity. It is true he possessed a Fulgentius, and seems to have believed that when the Trojans pulled the wooden horse to the Acropolis, a voluptuous city was establishing the evil appetites in the habitation of reason; but generally speaking his vision was clear, and why? He adopted the only true critical view: he lived with his authors and took them on their own terms. 'My contemporaries', he said, 'are breathing corpses, the ancient dead are the only living persons,' and he wished himself back a horrid pagan among them; nor is it a mere question of chronology, it is a question of actual preference when, in the letter describing a visit to Rome, he first speaks of the tomb of Scipio, and only as a kind of afterthought goes on to speak of the tombs of the saints. So the ancients become his friends, he reads whatever they have written (*libris satiari nequeo*), he addresses them as though they lived: what is more, using a valuable privilege

of friendship, he points out all their weaknesses, he becomes the affectionate critic. Affectionate criticism of the Classics is now, of course, a hackneyed and popular trade; it was not so when Petrarch lived. Of ignorant perversion there was plenty, and of silly idolatry not a little: you either misconstrued your author or, like the old grammarian at Vicenza, swallowed him whole, having read a part. Petrarch did none of these things. His attitude is well revealed by the contents of a letter about Seneca and Cicero: 'I have dealt familiarly with these great men', he writes, 'and perhaps boldly, but I think lovingly, sorrowfully, and truthfully, with somewhat more of truthfulness, in fact, than I myself relish. There are many things in both of them that delight me, only a few that trouble me: of these few I felt constrained to write; perhaps to-day I should feel otherwise. But remember that with regard to the things I cannot praise, no true judgement can be framed by you or any one else without a careful reading of the entire correspondence of Cicero.' This is something quite new: there was, of course, a mediaeval reverence for Rome, a kind of traditional dependence on a mysterious and almost magical past; but it was religious and not historical. Here, on the contrary, another ideal is set—the ideal of a vivid and critical apprehension of facts as they really are. When Petrarch approaches the men of old in this spirit, it means nothing less than this, that

modern Italy has at last begun to regain admission to the ancient culture, that at the point where the barbarian has snapped it the chain of life is resumed. It means the rebirth.

Feeling thus for the ancient world, Petrarch acted as pioneer in the work of its recapture, and he had great requisites for the office. He saw instinctively the essential things to do, and inspired others. John of Ravenna, to take an example, was his secretary, ran away from his master, became a vagabond scholar, and inspired the great Poggio. We even hear of old men hobbling across Italy in order to talk with Petrarch. Princes competed for his presence at their Court; even the unlettered joined in the ardour of the chase: he made his cause fashionable.

I do not mean to go into the details of what was done: Petrarch travelled in Germany, France, and Flanders in search of manuscripts, and set others travelling: there was the triumph at Verona, when he brought into open daylight the manuscript of the letters of Cicero to Atticus. He copied and collected until he had formed a library of 200 volumes, from which Lucretius alone of the great Latin writers was absent; he was the first Western—excluding a possible exception at the Court of Naples—to learn Greek, which he did in scattered lessons from the great Barlaam: he thus paved the way for Chrysoloras, who saved Greek for Europe. In an age when

all libraries were private, he first conceived the idea of a public library in the bequest of his own to Venice; by writing and travel he made learning an international thing, and founded the great republic of letters—all this is in all the books. What I would rather say is this, and it is a word of warning. However tempting it is, we must not attribute to Petrarch all the consequences which flowed from the Petrarchist movement. There is no doubt, for instance, that a new intellectual freedom was one of the outcomes of this great revival; it is also true that when men began to think for themselves they asked inconvenient questions about religion, and that finally the Humanists ranged themselves definitely on the anti-Christian side: but it would be untrue to maintain that such a freedom was within the programme of Petrarch. 'Petrarch', says Boccaccio, 'was the model of Catholic holiness,' and it is quite clear from Petrarch's writings, that where a question arises between pagan and Christian authority, it is the pagan authority which goes quite summarily to the wall. If pagan corroborated Christian, so much the better; where no obvious question of agreement or conflict arose, like a wise man he preferred to keep the two in separate compartments. He pursued a conciliatory course: '"nemo dux spernendus est qui viam salutis ostentat"—"ego utrosque simul amare posse videor"'. Petrarch was a liberal man; all he asked for was the exercise of a little common sense;

he did not wish to remain a fool for Christ's sake, but he was not in search of an intellectual revolution.

There is another point. Petrarch was a politician. In 1347 he threw in his lot with Cola di Rienzo in his attempt to restore the Republic; the attempt of course failed—Rienzo was a mad antiquarian, who finally outraged Rome by bathing in the porphyry font of the Lateran: in 1350 or 1351 he invited the Emperor, Charles IV, to come to Rome and sit upon the Imperial throne. The two policies seem to conflict, but the same purpose animated both: Rome was once more to become the centre of government, and failing a Republican Rome on the old model, then an Imperial Rome on the old model as second-best course—at any cost Rome and an antiquarian revival. In Rienzo Petrarch was looking back to a tribune like Gracchus, in Charles IV to an Emperor like Augustus: and to such revivals the ancient literature was to play the part of hand-maid. Petrarch actually thought, it is recorded, that through Latin, and Latin alone, he would restore the lost sense of nationality, and he thought that through a persistent summons to the ancient history he very slowly would recall his contemporaries to the ancient pride. The mediaeval man had adapted the pagan literature to suit existing conditions; Petrarch was forcing existing conditions back into the mould of the pagan literature. That, for him, was a more important thing

than the general widening of intelligence or the quickening of the world's wits.

Petrarch died on July 17, 1374, and died busy in this particular cause; he was found in his study, bowed over a manuscript which is now to be seen in the National Library of Paris: the handwriting, as De Nolhac observes, has grown feeble as the last sentence breaks at a reference, and the work is his biography of Julius Caesar. He had given out to his clerical friends that he would devote his declining years to the study of the Holy Fathers.

It is now time that we approach the other side of Petrarch's career, which has been hidden entirely from sight during the consideration of Petrarch as Humanist. It is only fair to say that the reticence is Petrarch's as well as our own: he too kept things in separate compartments, and into his business as scholar or politician there is allowed to intrude no shadow of his private, or what one might almost call his vernacular sorrow: in all the letters Laura is mentioned but once by name, and that in answer to the impertinent question of a friend.

The Beatrice of Dante may be fading into a phantom; but Laura was a real person, and Petrarch saw her for the first time on April 6, 1327, when he allowed his eyes to stray in a church at Avignon. She was of noble birth, fair-haired, dark-eyed, austere, and married: she had no care for literature, but was possessed of the placid disposition of Milton's

Eve: her nervous system, to quote from Meredith, appears to have been that of a dumpling, a very wholesome antidote, but probably also a stimulus to her excited admirer. Petrarch was immediately captivated, and the verses began, 'The trivial verses filled with the offensive praise of women'. She, on her side, was quite content to be the subject of poetry, though if she had a sense of humour she may have thought it odd that the mother of seven children should have been selected for the honour; still, if he liked to play the troubadour, there was nothing to prevent him: everything indeed pointed that way. Laura, an inexpugnable fortress and separated from her lover by gulf of marriage and of birth, precisely answered the tests of troubadour minstrelsy, and Petrarch on his side was breathing Provençal air, and his head was alive with the poetry of Arnaud Daniel: there was nothing new in the situation; every rule of the game was being observed.

But it is clear that, before long, convention ceased and passion began: Petrarch became a desperate lover on a very intricate sea of love. To follow the voyage in detail is unprofitable, and I am incapable of doing it: there are the usual rays of hope, the usual doubts, and more than usual self-reproach. Laura remained firm, the favours were few and far between, sometimes a glance, interpreted as kind, and on his lucky days a smile—but nothing more.

Finally, after catching at many straws, the wretched man is driven to declare that he was in love with Laura's mind: with convention the romance has started, with convention it ends. On the one side Daniel, on the other Plato.

That curious dialogue with St. Augustine called the *Secretum* or the *De Contemptu Mundi* makes it quite clear that Petrarch's peculiar anguish was due not merely to unrequited love but to a damaged sense of decorum. The Archdeacon was stronger within him than the Bohemian: he was, to tell the truth, a little of a prig, extremely vain and introspective; he was not the man to lose himself in another person, but rather a cultured egoist in trouble about his soul, likely enough to write good verses on love, but not the ideal lover: too often the thought arose within him—what kind of figure shall I cut on the Day of Judgement? Therefore we must not be surprised that Laura's death appeared to him in a double light: as a lover he writes on the fly-leaf of his Virgil that in the year 1348 the bright light of her life was taken away from the light of this earth, and he reckons that there ought to be nothing to give him further pleasure in this world. That is quite proper: but there is another side. He viewed her death as a respectable man, and as such adjudged it a relief. Hence the two chill epithets he lets fall: her death was necessary, her death was useful; he even implied that she died in the nick of time, when the glow of

his passion was beginning to cool; he even in one place confesses that the making of verse in her honour had become a pastime. Petrarch felt himself free. He calmly and coldly enjoys his freedom in perfecting the monument to her name; no doubt he wished the monument to be perfect for her sake—he was still more anxious to make it worthy of himself. Anyhow, by her death a very great point was gained: he had reached the moral harbour; there was no more need for the shut valley of Vaucluse as a refuge from torment and temptation.

Petrarch is full of contradiction, *totus in motu*: he wrote a treatise in praise of solitude, and yet sojourned for eight years at the noisy and wicked court of the Visconti at Milan; he spoke disrespectfully of the vernacular, and yet for thirty-two years polished and re-polished the Laura poetry; he even says, though it is probably untrue, that he refrained from Dante's comedy until his fifty-fifth year, for fear of diverting his native Italian style—a queer confession to come from a man who reckoned Italian as nought. Petrarch's attitude to Dante and to the vernacular is one of the most curious things in literary history. Dante had been a co-exile with Petrarch's father, and Petrarch saw him but once, and that when a child, but he seems to have disliked him; he disliked what he called the asperity of his habits, the grim precision, perhaps, with which Dante placed his contemporaries into hell. For the

vernacular his contempt was that of an aristocrat; he hated the speech which he heard misused in the streets by the vulgar. Boccaccio should have taught him better, but unhappily Petrarch taught Boccaccio, not Boccaccio Petrarch; that is why Boccaccio wrote a guide concerning mountains, woods, fountains, lakes, rivers, ponds, and marshes, concerning the names of the sea—in the Latin language. Petrarch led him astray. And yet in spite of all this obstinacy as a Latinist, there can hardly be an instance in any language of a man more diligent in the craft of his choice than was this very same Petrarch in the craft of his contempt: he might call the vernacular poetry trivial and inept, but he spared no pains to make it as glorious as he knew.

Petrarch believed in hard work: whatever he did, he did with all his force. He might be ashamed of the matter, he was determined to have no cause to be ashamed of the form. An odd memorandum at the head of one of the sonnets reveals the pains to which he went: 'I began this', he writes, 'by the impulse of the Lord, September 10, at the dawn of day, after my morning prayers: these two verses I must rewrite, they must also be transposed, 3 a.m., October 19. I like this, October 30, 10 a.m. in the morning: No, this does not please me, December 20, in the evening'; and finally, 'I shall return to this again; I am called to supper.' With all this care, with all his training behind him, no wonder Petrarch

produced a finished body of verse; and since he played the lute and his ear was good, the poems were pleasant to hear and pleasant to learn: boys began to spout them in the street, and even carpenters, fullers, and farmers babbled of the muses and Apollo —'that is precisely the penalty', is Petrarch's comment, 'of writing in the popular speech'.

So the poems were successful, and in favour Petrarch quickly outstripped as a sonneteer his forerunner Dante. They were two very different poets: Dante was philosophic and cold, and required a chair and a lecturer within fifty-three years of his death: he had made no concessions to popular weakness of mind or popular weakness of character. Petrarch disliked philosophy, courted the applause of his fellows, and was easy to understand. Besides, while Beatrice was far away, Laura remained substantial; however much Petrarch tried, she had never become an abstract principle of beauty. Every one knew what had happened. A man does not shut himself up in a cottage and live on vegetables in order to escape from an abstract principle. Finally, by sheer weight of numbers Dante was overborne. The sonnets of Dante were just a by-product; three hundred and seventeen stand to the name of Petrarch.

Vaucluse lies in a pleasant corner of the world, rich in wine and cookery, and in this age persons of discretion find it more convenient to visit the home of the poet than to read his poetry. A sequence of

sonnets—even when lyrics interrupt the sheer succession—is always a drastic discipline, and the kind of perfection to which Petrarch attained is a kind that cloys; there are few surprises, the range of ideas is small, and what variety there is is only gained by an occasional metrical change, and by the cunning mutations of phrase in the statement of identical propositions.

Still, in spite of monotony of matter, the sonnet of Petrarch was a great achievement, and he showed his subtle instinct when he chose it for his special form: it suited his case, and, since it is full of artifice, it suited his gifts. Real emotion is something which overflows, and refuses to be confined within fourteen lines: for Petrarch's melancholy and studied languor, fourteen lines was just the measure; the Greeks in their love-sick epigrams had contented themselves with less.

If you want emotion in Petrarch of a really genuine kind, you will go to the varied canzoni, the lyrical poems with their twenty different systems of stanza. Italy moved him most: *Si quid amabile, in Italia est*, 'Whatever is lovable is in Italy', and he became a genuine man in an ode like 'Italia mia'. He had political fervour. 'Drive out', elsewhere he cries, 'the Germans from the land. They are only the men whom our Marius once defeated on the day when, thirsty and weary, he drank from the river less water than blood.' The *Trionfi* are something different.

There he is aping the more intellectual manner of Dante, and save in the closing passage of the Triumph of Death, the effect is forced and cold.

I do not mean to worry you with a technical exposition of the Petrarchan sonnet. It is enough to say that the plan is almost exclusively laid for the single purpose of securing a peaceful effect: the two quatrains invariably rhymed alike, the first verse rhyming with the fourth in each, calmly present the case, and though there is room for excitement in the variety of the two tersets, yet very often the rhyme of the second merely repeats the rhyme of the first, and so, what began in tranquillity ends in tranquillity also. The effect of sonnet succeeding to sonnet, according to this scheme, is that of a soporific.

Apart from the tranquil form, the style is, as one expects from its Troubadour source, a little exotic. Petrarch was fond of words and phrases, and, like the silver writers of Rome, sought the ingenious rather than the true, and often the neat rather than the beautiful. Verbal antithesis held him in thrall; sometimes, of course, the saner Roman tradition keeps him in check, and then his work is grave and good. But in the particular mood of the Troubadour there is nothing he will not dare: he invokes the rocks in the water, and claims they all should take steps to learn how to glow with a flame like his; Laura's eyes can burn the frozen Rhine and crack the hardest stones; in summer Laura turns him to ice,

in winter to fire. He juggles with Laura's name: it is sometimes the shrub, and sometimes l'Aurora the dawn; there is hardly a mention of her hair which does not provoke a smile. The Irish alone can carry off these audacities—it is part of their native wit; in Petrarch it is a solemn mannerism: all the same, I imagine that it is no mere accident that the one good version of a sonnet by Petrarch upon which I have lighted is that done into English prose by J. H. Synge, the Irish revivalist. I will read his version: it is a translation of the sonnet beginning 'La vita fugge'. 'Life is flying from me, not stopping an hour, and death is making great strides to follow in my track; the days about me, and the days passed over me, are bringing me desolation, and the days to come will be the same surely. All things that I am bearing in mind, and all things I am in dread of, are keeping me in trouble, in this way one time, in that way another time, so that if I wasn't taking pity on my own self, it's long ago I'd have given up my life. If my dark heart had any sweet thing, it is turned away from me, and then farther off I see the great winds where I must be sailing. I see my good luck far away in the harbour, but my steersman is tired out, and the masts and the ropes on them are broken, and the beautiful lights where I would be always looking are quenched.'

This sonnet of Petrarch's is not one of the Troubadour type, indeed it is one of his best; but I cannot

help feeling that Synge was directed to the sonnets of Petrarch, of which he has translated not a few, by the strain of extravagance which he found, and which is common to his native tongue.

After Petrarch's death, the word Petrarchist became in course of time a term of reproach. Trivial persons seized on the trivial things, and even a man of power like Ronsard became a second Bembo, a mere transcriber of conceits; in him all the old properties reappear: flowers and precious stones, tigresses and Medusas. It matters not whom he celebrates—Astraea, Cassandra, Marie, Clytemnestra, Helen: they all *ipso facto* possess ebony eyebrows, ivory shoulders, imprisoning hair.

In England it was ridicule killed the love-sonnet sequence; even Sir Philip Sidney, himself a high practitioner in the art, had many doubts—

> You that poor Petrarch's long deceasèd woes
> With new-born sighs and denizened wit do sing,
> You take wrong ways! Those forfeit helps be such
> As do bewray a want of inward touch,
> And sure at length stol'n goods do come to light.

And later Sir John Davis circulated a series of nine gulling sonnets or parodies to stamp out the folly. Davis was a hard-headed lawyer, and demanded honest British verse. But to blame Petrarch for this result is about as rational as it would be to blame him for all the bad Latin proses written since the revival of learning. There is a wider and a truer

view. If Petrarch did little for the content of Poetry, he did a service untold for the form. In England you can measure that service by the difference which separates the sonnets of our first Petrarchist, Wyatt, from the sonnets of Shakespeare; in France, by the gulf which divides the cumbrous strophes of the French Pindaric ode from the lyric poetry of France to-day. At the back of either development, Petrarch stands as the master.

The Renaissance is the period of all-round men. Petrarch was the first of the type. Some of his successors may appear more spectacular in the variety of their accomplishments—Alberti, for instance, who could design a church and jerk a penny over its dome, who could tame wild horses and write a comedy—yet Petrarch himself could boast of no mean range. Fired by a craving for personal glory, he put aside the ideal of the passive virtues, and strove for the full development of all his powers. It made him restless, no doubt—it even made him unhappy; but onward he pushed, and, since he competed with none, was the friend of all.

He was scholar, poet, politician, moralist, historian and traveller, musician and gardener. After the manner of scholars, he may have looked back too fondly to the past; but even if he did, he held in his hand, unconsciously perhaps, as no one had held before, the fruitful seeds of the future. 'Perhaps we shall not be liked the better', says Boccaccio to

Petrarch, in the *Pentameron*, 'for what we ourselves have written; yet I do believe we shall be thanked for having brought to light, and for having sent into circulation, the writings of other men. We deserve as much, were it only that it gives people an opportunity of running over us, as ants over the image of gods in our hands, and of reaching by our means the less crude fruit of less ungenial days. Be this as it may, we have spent our time well in doing it, and enjoy (what idlers never can) as pleasant a view in looking back as forward.'

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RACINE IN ENGLAND

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RACINE IN ENGLAND

I TRUST the title 'Racine in England' has led no one to expect a startling discovery in the biographical sphere. I have none to offer. It has not yet been suggested that Jean Racine ever set foot upon our shores, or that he was tempted at any moment in his career (as his friend the Fabulist undoubtedly was tempted) to cross the Channel and join the little group of French gentlemen in London whose exile was cheered by the wisdom of Saint-Évremond and the grace of Madame Mazarin. My subject is the reception which the tragedies of Racine met with among our ancestors, and the reputation they have borne during the seven or eight generations which have passed since they were first brought to the notice of English people. It would be strange if it had always stood at a dead level, and in any fair account of the matter several phases ought to be distinguished; but upon the whole, let it be said at once, the fluctuations of favour and disfavour do not seem to have been considerable. It is known that Racine was read from the first, in the original, by the small class of English people who, in the age of Dryden, looked eagerly to France for novelties in literature. A much wider public saw English translations or imitations of his plays performed upon our stage in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth. Similar experiments had been made much earlier, and continued to be made, with Corneille. The *Cid* had been played in English before Charles I and his French queen; and, in the first years of the Restoration, versions of *La Mort de Pompée*, *Horace*, *Héraclius*, *Nicomède*, and *Le Menteur* had been

produced with more or less applause. The most famous of these is the *Pompey* of Katherine Philips, 'the matchless Orinda', a faithful and spirited translation brilliantly presented in Dublin and hyperbolically praised by her elegant and learned circle; the most popular was probably *Heraclius, Emperor of the East*, which Pepys saw several times with much satisfaction. The first attempt to acclimatize, or to exploit, Racine was made in 1675, when an *Andromache* was produced at the Duke's Theatre in London and published by the prolific playwright John Crowne, with a preface in which he disclaimed the authorship. The translator, 'a young gentleman, who has a great esteem of all French plays, and particularly of this', had asked him to revise for the stage a version of *Andromaque* in English rhyming couplets. Crowne thought the verse poor, and turned nearly four acts into prose, but left the rest as it was. This hybrid seems to have had very little success, in spite of an improvement on the original in the last act, where (says Crowne) 'what was only dully recited in the French Playe, is represented'. This is, of course, the assassination of Pyrrhus.

Two years later appeared the *Titus and Berenice* of Thomas Otway. It has three acts for Racine's five, and there are some important differences in the affabulation. Otway makes Antiochus confide his love for Berenice to the Emperor before he is entrusted with the message which is to destroy the Queen's hopes; and the play ends upon a note of savage despair, very different from the sorrowful acquiescence which is that of *Berenice*. We are unprepared for the final tirade in which Titus threatens to avenge his private wound by becoming the tyrant of his people. Throughout, the logic of passion is merely obscured by merciless excisions. With all

this, the English play is a translation, and in many parts a close one, and it is not true that nothing of Racine's spirit has passed into the verse of Otway. We miss, indeed, at many turns, the pregnancy and the reticence of the French. When Berenice, in her first confident mood, learns that Antiochus is leaving Rome, she asks, with ingenuous cruelty:

> What pleasure in my greatness can I find,
> When I shall want my best and truest friend?

Antiochus answers:

> I reach your Purpose; you would have me there,
> That you might see the worst of my Despair.
> I know it, the Ambition of your Soul;
> 'Tis true, I've been a fond obedient Fool.
> Yet came this to me but to new-freight my heart,
> And, with more love possest than ever, part.

Here is the corresponding passage of Racine:

Bérénice. A regret je reçois vos adieux.
Le Ciel fait qu'au milieu des honneurs qu'il m'envoie
Je n'attendois que vous pour témoin de ma joie . . .
Cent fois je me suis fait une douceur extrême
D'entretenir Titus dans un autre moi-même.
Titus. Et c'est ce que je fais. J'évite, mais trop tard,
Ces cruels entretiens où je n'ai point de part.
Je fuis Titus. Je fuis ce nom qui m'inquiète,
Ce nom qu'à tous moments votre bouche répète.
Que vous dirai-je enfin? Je fuis des yeux distraits,
Qui, me voyant toujours, ne me voyoient jamais.
Adieu. Je vais, le cœur tout plein de votre image,
Attendre, en vous aimant, la mort pour mon partage.

On the other hand, exact and satisfying equivalents are not rare: this, for instance—

> Oh! give me more Content, and less of State,

for:

> Hélas! plus de repos, Seigneur, et moins d'éclat.

Above all, that grandiloquence, which is the common vice of Otway's contemporaries in serious drama, and disfigures almost all imitations of Racine, is wholly absent. If this early effort does not promise *The Orphan* or *Venice Preserv'd*, it shows already something of that power in him which Dryden called nature. The characters here, as in the French, talk simply. Yet it must be owned that Otway, more than once, in seeking simplicity achieves flatness, as when his confidant calls Antiochus

> One of the greatest of our Eastern Kings,

and Titus confesses :

> The loose wild Paths of Pleasure I pursu'd
> Till *Berenice* first taught me to be good.

On the whole, this version is not too much to be despised. Though Betterton and Mrs. Lee appeared in the chief characters, it never became a favourite with the Restoration public, and the translator was not tempted to repeat his venture. For the sake of Racine, we may regret it. The mature art of Otway has no analogy, whatever may be said, with the Frenchman's: yet in temperament—in the union of tenderness and devouring passion—they were not, perhaps, so unlike, but that he, if any one, might have succeeded in the delicate task of transplantation.

In the year 1699 a Huguenot refugee, Abel Boyer, put forth an adaptation of *Iphigénie* under the title of *Achilles, or Iphigenia in Aulis*. Boyer was known in London as a French tutor and an industrious translator, and was shortly to publish the great dictionary of the two languages which had no serious rival for upwards of a century. Later on, he won a kind of celebrity as a pamphleteer, as the editor of *The Post-Boy*

and the historian of the reigns of King William and Queen Anne. He knew English intimately and wrote it as easily as his countryman Motteux. Nothing in *Achilles* betrays the foreigner, and its blank verse (barring some dubious stresses) is pretty tolerable. There are some alexandrines, and occasional short lines. He said long afterwards that Dryden himself had looked through his manuscript. A great part of the play is a free but most distinct rendering of the French: but the longer speeches are divided, and there is a great deal of mere 'padding'.

Four lines are enough to illustrate his manner:

You may securely tire the Gods with Prayers,
And load their Altars with tame Offerings;
You may consult the panting Victim's Breast,
And search the Cause of the Wind's tedious silence . . .

There is nothing to be said against these lines as a translation, except that the words 'tame', 'panting', and 'tedious' are superfluous. But it is not until the final act that he gives rein to his constructive talents. This is how he understood the process of accommodating Racine to the English taste. The moment is arrived at which the awful sacrifice is to be consummated. After a last passionate outburst, Clytemnestra 'runs off with her maids' and the stage is left empty for a moment. Then (I am quoting the stage directions),

> *while a symphony is playing, an Altar is rais'd near the sea-shore. Enter King* Agamemnon *weeping;* Menelaus, Nestor, Ulysses, Aeneas, etc.; Calchas *the High Priest;* Iphigenia *between two Priests;* Eriphile, Doris.

A chorus of priests sings the invocation to Diana 'set by Mr. Finger'.

> *As Iphigenia is leading to be sacrific'd, the Sun is eclips'd; Shrieks in the Air; subterranean Groans and Howlings; Thunder.*

Calchas asks, 'What mean these Horrors?', and Eriphile whispers: 'Oh! Doris, how I tremble!'

(*Clashing of Swords within.*) *Enter* Achilles, Patroclus, *and Followers.*

Achilles. Where! Where's my Iphigenia?
Hold, Murderers, hold!

Calchas. My Lord, constrain your Passion; I bid you hold.
The Gods themselves are angry—They must first be heard. (*Thunder.*)

The High Priest having consulted the Oracle returns with all the signs of terror and delivers it. He ends by pointing to Eriphile: 'The Gods demand'——

(*As* Calchas *is going to lay hold on* Eriphile, *she snatches the Knife.*)

Butcher, avaunt! . . .
I fall a Victim to a greater Power.
Almighty Love now strikes the fatal Blow.
(*Stabs herself.*)
Achilles, dear—Achilles . . (*Dies.*)

Iphigenia. Unhappy Maid!

(*Thunder and Lightning. . . . Diana, in a Machine, crosses the Stage.*)

Calchas. Great sir, the gods are satisfied;
And Iphigenia is yours again!

Agamemnon. Must I believe my Eyes! Oh! Sir! Oh! Daughter!

In spite of (I fear we must not say because of) these spectacular condiments, Boyer's play was a failure. His own account of the matter is that it was prejudiced by the recent appearance of a classical tragedy by John Dennis on the subject of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and also by the ill-acting of Eriphile. He was certainly unfortunate, for in 1714 another adaptation of Racine's tragedy, called *The Victim*, by Charles Johnson, was produced by Wilks at Drury Lane, and pleased the public better, for reasons I have been unable to discover.

Boyer, accusing Johnson of plagiarism, promptly republished his own play with Johnson's title. A charge of this kind brought by one adapter against another will always be heard sceptically. I have had the patience to compare them, and I conclude that as far as the main body of Johnson's play goes, Boyer has little to complain of. The second version is more distant from Racine, and in some things follows Euripides: Menelaus, who is only seen in dumb show in Boyer's play and does not appear in Racine's, intervenes here, as he does in Euripides. But it is incredible that Johnson did not filch his final scene from Boyer. The altar, the procession, the Invocation to Diana, the thunder and lightning, all are there. The entry of Achilles is a little delayed, and Eriphile is rather longer dying; the speeches (which are to the same effect) are a little more substantial and the Invocation somewhat shorter; nor does Diana appear in a Machine: that is the whole difference. As for the relative merit of the two plays, it may be said that Johnson's lines are smoother and his style upon the whole less vigorous. A last distinction must be added: he does not name Racine; Boyer does, and handsomely.

Between these two adaptations, in 1706 and 1712 respectively, appeared the two most famous English plays which are connected with the name of Racine. The first is *Phaedra and Hippolytus*, by Mr. Edmund Neale or Smith, of Christ Church, known sometimes as 'the handsome sloven', and sometimes as 'Captain Rag'. This tragedy is only in part a paraphrase of *Phèdre*. Smith went directly to Euripides and to Seneca for a great part of his material; apart from a number of particular passages, he got from Racine the idea of Hippolytus in love; the unravelling is entirely his own. Some characteristic differences in the affabulation are these: Phaedra, in

the first act, confesses her passion before Ismena (the Aricie of Racine), who is already known to be beloved by Hippolytus; in the scene in which Hippolytus learns her guilty secret (in which the author follows Racine pretty closely), the Queen endeavours to reassure him by protesting that she has been only in name a wife to Theseus; Ismena reproaches her lover at first with infidelity, but is convinced of his innocence, and they plan to escape together, but are arrested by the Queen's orders; the return of Theseus is delayed until this point. As for the catastrophe, Phaedra kills herself on hearing that Hippolytus has died by his own act, but the news was false, and at the end he reappears to receive Ismena from the hand of his father. The play has little to recommend it, being as poor in characterization as it is inflated in language. When it was first put upon the stage, it ran for four nights only, the rival attraction of the Italian opera being too strong for it, if we may trust Addison, who, in a well-known essay attacking that kind of entertainment, asked indignantly:

'Would one think it was possible (at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phaedra and Hippolytus*) for a people to be so stupidly fond of the *Italian* opera, as scarce to give a third day's hearing to that admirable tragedy?'

Something must be allowed to private friendship and something to a sincere dislike of a foreign fashion. Addison repeated the attack in a prologue with which he consoled the author of the slighted tragedy. Smith, however, did not need consolation long. *Phaedra and Hippolytus* was revived and soon became almost popular; it was played at intervals until near the end of the century, and the book was certainly much read: a fourth edition appeared in 1729. But a more immediate

triumph and a more durable reputation was won by *The Distrest Mother* of Ambrose Philips, the author of the Pastorals, the client of Steele and Addison and the victim of Alexander Pope. It is not necessary to say much of the circumstances which attended the production of this tragedy, or of the quarrel which followed it: they belong at most to the suburbs of my subject. Every reader of the *Spectator* knows how Steele prepared his public 'to see truth and human life represented in the incidents which concern heroes and heroines', in a play of which the style 'is such as becomes those of the first education', and the sentiments are 'worthy of those of the highest figure'; every one who loves Sir Roger has accompanied him, with Captain Sentry, to Drury Lane, and has been diverted with the old Knight's comments on the tragedy: his saying, upon the entering of Pyrrhus, 'that he did not believe the King of France himself had a better strut', and of Andromache's obstinacy: 'You can't imagine, Sir, what it is to have to do with a widow', and of Hermione: 'On my word, a notable young baggage', and the anxious question: 'Should your people in tragedy always talk to be understood?' The piece appeared on March 17, 1711, before a house packed, according to Pope, with the author's friends. The prologue was written by Steele. It is (like the preface with which Philips introduced the published play) mainly a vindication of what was understood to be the grand characteristic of classical drama:

> Since Fancy of itself is loose and vain,
> The wise by Rules that airy Power restrain.

The genius of Shakespeare might be suffered to laugh at distance; but

> Our Author does his feeble force confess . . .
> And therefore makes propriety his aim . . .

Not only Rules of Time and Place preserves,
But strives to keep his Characters entire,
With French Correctness and with British Fire.
This Piece presented in a foreign Tongue
When France was glorious and her Monarch young
A hundred times a crowded Audience drew,
A hundred times repeated, still 'twas new.

The Distrest Mother is written in blank verse of middling quality, with the usual tail-pieces in rhyme, and in a style not indeed inflated, but thoroughly conventional. The heroine is 'Hector's afflicted widow' and even '*bright* Andromache', Hermione is an 'inhuman fair'; and such lines as

> Will you refuse me a propitious smile?
> I have determined to espouse Hermione.
> O charming princess! O transcendent maid!
> This violence of temper may prove fatal,
> The court of Pyrrhus has no room for me.

are by no means exceptionally insipid. To establish the exact relation of this paraphrase, which every now and then becomes an almost literal translation, would be a tedious task. In general I would say that Philips follows his author scene by scene, and most often speech by speech, is commendably anxious to let nothing drop, and sometimes shows himself skilfully concise; but that his whole tendency is to be explicit where Racine was reserved, and that this result is obtained chiefly by a deplorable prodigality of epithet, but also by the systematic addition of moralizing tirades at the end of every act. One example will suffice. The second act closes with this speech of Pyrrhus:

> Oh 'tis a heavy task to conquer love,
> And wean the soul from her accustom'd fondness!
> But come—A long farewell to Hector's widow!
> 'Tis with a secret pleasure I look back,
> And see the many dangers I have pass'd.

The merchant, thus, in dreadful tempests toss'd,
Thrown by the waves on some unlook'd-for coast,
Oft turns, and sees, with a delighted eye,
Midst rocks and shelves, the broken billows fly;
And, while the outrageous winds the deep deform,
Smiles on the tumult, and enjoys the storm.

It is, I suppose, creditable to the courage of Ambrose Philips that he ventured to deprive his audience of a bloody scene. Except for a 'flourish within' which provokes Andromache, preparing to meet the King of Epirus in the temple, to exclaim:

Hark how the trumpet, with its sprightly notes,
Proclaims th' appointed hour, and calls me hence!

he abstains from scenic effects until near the end. Then, however, he cannot resist the temptation to prolong the delirium of Orestes—for the edification of such spectators as Sir Roger de Coverley, who, you may remember, 'grew more than ordinarily serious, and took occasion to moralize, in his way, upon an evil conscience', adding, that Orestes in his madness looked as if he saw something. Nor can he forbear to give a last sight of Andromache, who comes on processionally, with 'a dead march behind', to vituperate the Greeks, praise Pyrrhus, and justify the title:

O, Cephisa!
A springing joy, mix'd with a soft concern,
A pleasure which no language can express,
An ecstasy that mothers only feel,
Plays round my heart, and heightens up my sorrow,
Like gleams of sunshine in a low'ring sky.
Though plunged in ills, and exercised in care,
Yet never let the noble mind despair.
When press'd by dangers, and beset with foes,
The gods their timely succour interpose;
And when our virtue sinks, o'erwhelm'd with grief,
By unforeseen expedients brings relief?

Of the immense success achieved by this tragedy at its first appearance there seems to be no doubt. It was withdrawn after nine representations, however, to be revived only in 1735; but until the end of the century it remained in the repertory of the British stage, and among the famous actors who have appeared in the leading parts are Kean, the two Kembles, Mrs. West, Mrs. Siddons, and Mrs. Litchfield. The book ran through ten editions between 1712 and 1777.

Charles Johnson, the second adapter of *Iphigénie*, brought out a paraphrase of *Bajazet* at Drury Lane in 1717 under the title of *The Sultaness*. With Booth to represent Bajazet, Mrs. Porter as Roxana, and Mrs. Oldfield as Atalida, it was at first applauded, but pretty soon forgotten. Johnson, in his prologue, did not forget to name Racine, nor to repeat, from Racine's preface, the French poet's justification for so modern a subject:

A thousand leagues are like a thousand years.

An allusion to the recent fiasco of *Three Hours after Marriage*,

Such wags have been, who boldly durst adventure,
To club a farce by Tripartite indenture,

secured him a place in the *Dunciad*. This piece is not an adaptation; but it is as distant a copy of Racine as a translator, who has no notion of altering his text substantially, could execute. One quotation will, I believe, make it evident that Johnson understood neither the relations of the principal personages nor their characters. This is how Roxana speaks in that wonderful first interview with the Prince:

Oh! Bajazet, I feel, I feel I love thee!
Do not destroy us both! Let me not go,
Drive me not out to rage, to wild despair!
If one rash word or signal shou'd escape me,
Urged by thy cruel usage, thou art lost.

The French is:

Bajazet, écoutez, je sens que je vous aime.
Vous vous perdez. Gardez de me laisser sortir.
Le chemin est encore ouvert au repentir.
Ne désespérez point une amante en furie.
S'il m'échappoit un mot, c'est fait de votre vie.

Who does not feel that the tone of supplication in the English conflicts with the poet's conception of an appetite too peremptory to be pitiful, and a resentment that wastes no words? But the truth is that Johnson knew French too superficially for his task. On the impulse of her first disappointment, Roxana countermands the revolution in the palace, and says to Acomat:

Que le sérail soit désormais fermé,
Et que tout rentre ici dans l'ordre accoutumé!

This becomes in Johnson's version:

And on your life let none presume to enter
Without the *accustom'd orders!*

And, in the fourth act, when her confidant bids the Sultaness reflect that she has gone too far in treason to purchase forgiveness at any price, she is made to say:

Shou'd some unfaithful tongue, as such there are,
Disclose this fatal story to the Sultan;
Alas! you know too well, that hearts like his
Can never be regain'd, when once offended:
His sudden death, and at this very moment,
Wou'd prove your passion, not your duty, mov'd you!

What Racine wrote is this:

Et qui sait si déjà quelque bouche infidèle
Ne l'a point averti de votre amour nouvelle?
Des cœurs comme le sien, vous le savez assez,
Ne se regagnent plus quand ils sont offensés;
Et la plus prompte mort, dans ce moment sévère,
Devient de leur amour la marque la plus chère.

It did not occur to Johnson apparently that any life but Bajazet's could be at stake, or that any other passion

than Roxana's could write itself in blood. In short, *The Sultaness*, considered as a translation, is inadequate; and, considered as English poetry, contemptible.

These experiments, on which you will feel, perhaps, that I have spent too much time, are only a selection from the considerable number of English plays founded on Racine which belong to this period;[1] but I will mention two more, which were never intended, it seems, for the regular stage. One is Thomas Brereton's *Esther, or Faith Triumphant; a Sacred Drama*, published in 1715, with a letter of dedication to the Archbishop of York, in which the translator approves the example of 'the Virgins of Saint-Cyr', and though he dare not suggest 'that the Maids of the Retinue of our Queens (one Apartment of whose Palace, if I mistake not, is allotted to *Theatrical* Representations) might be not unsuitably exercised in such sort of Performances', recommends them as a recreation for 'chearfully Christian Families'. The version, in rhyming couplets, is fairly close, but colourless. The other is William Duncomb's *Athaliah*. Duncomb was himself a playwright, and was later to adapt to our stage the *Brutus* of Voltaire, when the tragedies of that author had their momentary vogue in England. His version of *Athalie* is competent and scrupulous, as may be judged from this rendering of a famed passage, 'Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots':

The Pow'r, which curbs the proudly-swollen Waves,
Can also blast the Plottings of the Wicked:
Humbly resign'd to his most holy Will.
Abner, 'tis God I fear, and Nought beside him.
Yet am I bound to thank that friendly zeal,
Which makes thee watchful to preserve my Life.

[1] The list may be completed by reference to: L. Charlanne, *L'Influence française en Angleterre au 17e Siècle* (1906), pp. 369-386; and to Miss D. F. Canfield's essay, *Corneille and Racine in England* (1904).

I see, Injustice grieves thy secret Soul,
And that thou'rt still, in Heart, an *Israelite.*
Thanks be to Heav'n! but wilt thou be content
With such Tame Anger, and such slothful Virtue?
Can Faith, which does not act, be thought sincere?

This is unpretentious, but faithful and not too creeping: the lyrical passages are less adequate, to say the least:

With lavish Hand, his Bounties He
  Diffuses all around,
Let us adore his Deity,
  His endless Praise resound.
Ere unborn Time had yet a Name,
  He was Eternal King:
Let us his Benefits proclaim,
  His boundless Glories sing.

This tripping rhythm has, I know, been frequently chosen for devotional exercises. To no one who knows the last drama of Racine will it recall the sweetness and amplitude of the choric interludes in *Athalie.*

* * * * *

It may be thought that a survey of English plays derived from one or other of Racine's can throw little light upon the general subject of his reputation in England. The multitude of these attempts shows at least that his prestige was already high enough to commend them to English playwrights as a likely foundation for new pieces. It is certain that not one of these gave London playgoers the opportunity of judging Racine upon his merits as a dramatist. We may take it for granted that in the most faithful and scholarly translation the peculiar essence of his poetry must evaporate. But how is it that his presentment of character and passion, his conception of dramatic economy, were invariably disfigured? How is it that hardly one of his imitators dreamed of presenting him untravestied? The ill success of many does not furnish a presumption that

an ingenuous transposition would have served the turn any better. If they missed the mark of public approval, it is likely that they aimed at least in the right direction. The fact is that, with an English audience, popular or cultivated, no serious story had then—or perhaps has ever had—a chance of pleasing, which did not kindle intense and instant emotion by vehement language supported or not by external means. Of that essential need the liking for a drama of complex incident and alternating moods, for pageantry, for bloodshed, was the superficial symptom, sometimes kept under by a theory: the need was constant. Too evidently Racine does not supply it. The interest of his tragedies lies not primarily in the intensity of suffering represented, but in the anxiety of spiritual conflicts. The 'improvements' practised upon them by our romantic cobblers, however clumsily executed, are an indication of what was thought wanting in him to satisfy a general taste. But their excisions are not less significant than what they added. In every version, in every adaptation I have seen, the speeches which exceed some dozen lines are interrupted, when they are not actually curtailed. This impatience, no doubt, proceeds from an idea of dramatic action which excludes, not analysis (for Racine does not suffer his characters to dissect themselves), but the active reasoning of contrary motives, and narrative designed not merely to illuminate the past but to prepare the future. In a word, in our classical period, Racine was acceptable in a travesty, or not acceptable at all, upon the English stage.

I find no trace of his influence on original drama in England, except in so far as his example, after that of Corneille, may have reinforced a spontaneous, or at least a homebred, tendency towards concentration and sim-

plicity of structure. He has no share in the vehemence of Lee or the placidity of Rowe. Nothing in *The Mourning Bride* recalls him; and if Addison's rigid and emphatic Cato has any prototype in the French Theatre, he has none in any tragedy of Racine.

That Racine was read in French by the polite and the judicious among our countrymen, in his own lifetime and increasingly through the next century, appears certain; but deliberate judgements upon his works are scarce. Dryden, who is well known to have admired Corneille, with reservations, as a fellow craftsman and as a dramatic theorist, had little to say of his successor. There is, however, one passage in which he delivers himself of some vigorous strictures upon *Phèdre*, and, though it is probably familiar to you, I will quote most of it, as a sort of pattern of much later criticism. It occurs in the preface to *All for Love*, where Dryden justifies the encounter between the wife and the mistress of Mark Antony:

'The French poets, I confess, are strict observers of these punctilios. They would not, for example, have suffered Cleopatra and Octavia to have met; or, if they had met, there must have only passed betwixt them some cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee, for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their sex. This objection I foresaw.'

And, after quoting Montaigne on ceremony, its importunity and deceitfulness, he continues:

'But while they affect to shine in trifles, they are often careless in essentials. Thus, their Hippolitus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death, than accuse his step-mother to his father; and my critics I am sure will commend him for it: But we of grosser apprehension are apt to think, that this excess of generosity is not practicable, but with

fools and madmen. This was good manners with a vengeance; and the audience is like to be much concerned at the misfortunes of this admirable hero. But take Hippolitus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part, to set the saddle on the right horse, and chuse rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain. In the meantime we may take notice, that where the poet ought to have preserved the character as it was delivered to us by antiquity, when he should have given us the picture of a rough young man, of the Amazonian strain, a jolly huntsman, and both by his profession and his early rising a mortal enemy to love, he has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, taught him to make love, and transformed the Hippolitus of Euripides into *Monsieur* Hippolite.'

The notion that Hippolytus keeps silent from no other motive than good breeding could not, you would suppose, have been entertained by any one who had read Racine's tragedy all through. But the other head of this hearty and amusing indictment—that Racine has turned 'a rough young man of the Amazonian strain' into a French courtier—is more serious. In a more general shape the charge of gallicizing the ancients had already been brought against him by critics of his own nation, notably by Saint-Évremond: indeed, I am not sure that these thrusts owe nothing to the suggestion of the old sceptic, whom Dryden knew and respected, especially as an authority on the limits of the French genius for poetry. The larger question involved is, whether the personages of antiquity, if they are to come alive again in modern works, must not be brought into the circle of our habits and credited with the manners we know. And the answer Shakespeare gives to the question in his Roman plays is the same, only more decidedly affirmative, as Racine's. But Dryden, pre-

possessed with the idea that *Phèdre* is an attempt to imitate Euripides, resented the alteration of a legendary character. And 'Monsieur Hippolite' has stuck.

Addison, in the next generation, passed for an admirer of the French classical tragedy; we know what he thought of the sensationalism of the English stage, and how he objected to tragicomedy that 'it breaks the tide of the passions while they are yet flowing'. Doubtless he valued many qualities in Racine, especially the natural tone, the single theme, the contempt for mechanical accessories; but I do not know where to look in his writings for an appreciation of the French poet. It is possible that Addison sincerely admired the *Phaedra and Hippolytus* of Edmund Smith: but could he at the same time have appreciated *Phèdre*?

In such a dearth of recorded opinions, an adjective might have its value:

Exact Racine, and Corneille's noble fire
Show'd us that France had something to admire,

wrote Pope in an imitation of Horace. And it is true that Racine is exact, and that Shakespeare, as Pope told his readers a few lines later, was fluent. The former of these epithets is not much more distinctive than the second. Another English poet, Thomas Gray, is among the few who are known to have enjoyed Racine, at least in the playhouse. Norton Nicholls, in his memorials of Gray, tells us that 'he admired Racine, particularly the *Britannicus*', but 'disliked French poetry in general', though he made exception in favour of La Fontaine and (of all poets!) the author of *Vert-Vert*. Gray and Walpole saw several of the classical masterpieces played in Paris in 1739: the *Cid*, Molière's *Avare* (of which Gray, writing to West, 'cannot at all commend the performance'), and *Phèdre*, besides *Britan-*

nicus. 'All the characters, particularly Agrippina and Nero, done to perfection,' he writes. Agrippina was most probably Mlle Dumesnil, of whose talent Mme du Deffand, against Walpole's judgement, thought poorly. It was the pleasure he took in this performance, apparently, which set him thinking of a tragedy to be called 'Agrippina', of which in 1741 he wrote a scene and the beginning of a second. West poured cold water on his friend's enthusiasm, and we have no more than a fragment in rather stately verse.

The greatest English critic of the eighteenth century hardly mentions Racine. He did indeed observe to Boswell, when they were sitting in the inn on the island of Mull, that 'as for original composition, the French have two tragic poets, Racine and Corneille, who go round the world; and one comic poet, Molière'. That Racine 'went round the world' nobody in that age could doubt: in England, his eminence was taken for granted, and gave no offence: a little of Racine perhaps was read by every one who read anything in French besides novels and memoirs: this is not to say that his works were often studied, discussed, or enjoyed in the eighteenth century.

A faithful but not otherwise remarkable verse translation of *Britannicus,* by Sir Brooke Boothby, published in 1803, is worth mentioning for its 'initial preface'. The translator's excuse is that 'the only pieces of Racine which remain on the English theatre, *Phèdre* and *Andromache,* are so much altered by their English dress as scarcely to afford any idea of the manner of the original'. He offers Racine as he is, but he is aware that there is less room than ever for 'so chaste and simple a tragedy' on a stage where the love of senseless show and sentimental extravagance is grown so universal that 'Shake-

speare and Congreve must retire for *Ballets of Action*, as Accius and Pacurius made way, in the days of Horace, for a camelopardus or a white elephant'.

'The characteristic of Racine', he continues, 'is purity of taste. He seldom attempts to create, but is content to imitate, and this he always does with great force and infinite propriety and art. His versification is generally agreed to have attained the summit of perfection, in a language the least of all others formed either for melody or figurative expression; and when it is remembered that he has restrained himself to the difficult unities of time and place, suited to the regular and simple construction of his plans, the best performances of Racine will always be considered as masterpieces of dramatic art.'

I will spare you Sir Brooke Boothby's remarks on the decay of declamatory skill among our actors, and on the demoralizing effect of a new kind of romantic play imported from Germany. The romantic battle is but opening; but you may observe that the position which the English admirer of Racine is ready to defend is nearly desperate already. His poet is an imitator of rare skill; his lines are wonderfully good, for French lines; and he deserves credit for having 'restrained himself to the difficult unities of time and place'.

At the moment of our imaginative revival, when 'the school of Pope' and 'the French school of poetry' were convertible terms, the tolerance of our neighbours fell into contempt with the leading critics of this nation. The bias of opinion which has nothing to do with literature sometimes may be observed in the expression of this general disesteem. 'France is my Babylon', avowed Coleridge. 'The impudence, even of a Frenchman,' cries De Quincey, 'would not dare to connect the sanctities of religious feeling with any book written in

his language.' It was natural that the French theatre should receive particular attention at this juncture. While scholars and poets were refreshing the study of Shakespeare and rediscovering Shakespeare's comrades and rivals, the comparison of the English poetical drama with that of other peoples, ancient and modern, became a favourite exercise of criticism. Racine was singled out to be confronted with Shakespeare; and so it happens that at the only period when his name occurs pretty often in English critical writings, he is never produced but as a foil.

The common attitude of English critics towards Racine in the early part of the nineteenth century could be illustrated out of many authors: but one must do; and I choose the most tolerant and the least pedantic, William Hazlitt. There is a passage which, as it does infinite credit to Hazlitt's candour, ought to be quoted first in this connexion:

'Neither can the disagreement between the French and English school of tragedy ever be reconciled, till the French become English, or the English, French. Both are right in what they admire, both are wrong in condemning the others for what they admire. We see the defects of Racine, they see the faults of Shakespeare, probably in an exaggerated point of view. But we may be sure of this, that when we see nothing but grossness and barbarism, or insipidity and verbiage, in a writer that is the God of a nation's idolatry, it is we and not they who want true taste and feeling.'

This is handsomely said, though as a fact Racine, so far from being 'the God of a nation's idolatry', has never been an object of unanimous veneration, beyond the reach of eminent detractors, in his own country. But the tone of Hazlitt's actual criticism is very different. In *The Plain Speaker*, he compares Scott,

Racine, and Shakespeare: here is a paragraph which sums up the parallel:

'The genius of Shakespeare is dramatic, that of Scott narrative or descriptive, that of Racine is didactic. He gives, as I conceive, the *commonplaces* of the human heart better than any one, but nothing, or very little more. He enlarges on a set of obvious sentiments and well-known topics with considerable elegance of language and copiousness of declamation, but there is scarcely one stroke of original genius nor anything like imagination in his writings. He strings together a number of moral reflections, and instead of reciting them himself, puts them into the mouths of his *dramatis personae*, who talk well about their own situations and the general relations of human life. Instead of laying bare the heart of the sufferer with all its bleeding wounds and palpitating fibres, he puts into his hand a commonplace book, and he reads us a lecture from this. This is not the essence of the drama, whose object and privilege it is to give us the extreme and subtle workings of the human mind in individual circumstances, to make us sympathize with the sufferer, or feel as we should feel in his circumstances, not to tell the indifferent spectator what the indifferent spectator could just as well tell him. Tragedy is human nature tried in the crucible of affliction, not exhibited in the vague theorems of speculation. The poet's pen that paints all this in words of fire and images of gold is totally wanting in Racine. He gives neither external images nor the internal and secret workings of the human breast. Sir W. Scott gives the external imagery or machinery of passion; Shakespeare the soul; and Racine the moral or argument of it.'

I have often wondered whether, as a fact, Hazlitt had ever read through one whole act of any tragedy of Racine, with or without a dictionary. Racine didactic? Racine reading us a lecture from a commonplace book? This should be the character of a poet from whom we could easily glean an anthology of maxims. Where are the well-known topics, the vague theorems of specu-

lation in Racine? For there must be instances. Is it Roxana's 'Sortez', or Hermione's 'Qui te l'a dit?', or Phaedra's 'Ils s'aimeront toujours'?

Hazlitt continues:

'The French object to Shakespeare for his breach of the Unities, and hold up Racine as a model of classical propriety, who makes a Greek hero address a Grecian heroine as *Madame*.'

And yet Hazlitt had certainly read Shakespeare, and was familiar with Sir Diomed and Lady Cressid. But there are other examples of his inattention.

'The finest line in Racine, that is, in French poetry, is by common consent understood to be the following:

Craignez Dieu, mon cher Abner, et ne craignez que Dieu!'

And for a striking instance of *pathos* in Racine he quotes Agamemnon: *Tu y seras, ma fille!*

But I will not insist on Hazlitt's incompetence. It is, after all, less presumptuous than that of Landor, who, in an Imaginary Conversation, undertakes to show that Racine's ear was defective. Hazlitt's opinion of French poetry, and of the dramatic poetry of Racine in particular, is a type of the opinion held by cultured Englishmen in the Romantic age. And, if it had been only his, it has had an influence, and has helped to diffuse a prejudice.

A generation later, Macaulay, who was not a Romantic critic, writes thus:

'We are sure that the Greeks of Shakespeare [he is speaking of *Troilus and Cressida*] bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine to the Greeks who besieged Troy'

and I dare say he is right; but why is he so sure?

'for this reason, that the Greeks of Shakespeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine mere names,

mere words painted in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation. Racine, it is true, would have shuddered at the thought of making a warrior at the siege of Troy quote Aristotle. But of what use is it to avoid a single anachronism, when the whole play is one anachronism, the sentiments and phrases of Versailles in the Camp of Aulis?'

The comment which suggests itself, even if one had never read *Iphigénie*, is this: If the personages gathered at the camp of Aulis express the sentiments of Versailles in the phrases of Versailles, though they do not talk like ancient Greeks, is there not a presumption that they talk at least like human beings? But, illogism apart, there is in Macaulay's tone, when he writes about Racine, an unmistakable antipathy which, as far as I can discover, was not at all exceptional in the middle of the last century.

Has that attitude become less common—I do not say among serious students of French Literature, who until quite recently were extremely few in England—but among well-educated Englishmen who in their general reading give some place to the French tragic poets? I might take such a book as Henry Trollope's *Corneille and Racine*, which forms part of a series of 'Foreign Classics for English Readers' and was evidently designed to be appreciative, and infer from some of the judgements it contains the persistence of an inveterate detraction. Or I might quote Mr. John Bailey's spirited endorsement of the traditional verdict on the extravagant claims which, as he supposes, are advanced by Frenchmen on behalf of Racine. To balance the weight of even the most recent testimony in this sense, it would need something more substantial and authoritative than an occasional expression of praise, such as might be discovered perhaps in the obscurer paths of

contemporary English criticism. But, indeed, the general conclusion, in regard to the reputation of Racine in England, is irresistible. It is recorded of very few Englishmen that they have read him with delight; and of many that his tragedies have been to them a stumbling-block upon the threshold (for it is there they meet him) of French literature. Those famous works, when most favourably judged, have been considered as accomplished examples of an unvalued kind, and credited with such merits of composition as are held irrelevant to the noblest ends of poetry.

In a case so notorious, it may seem idle to look for reasons. A genuine dislike owes none, and is intangible so long as it forbears to justify itself. Taste is not a matter of persuasion, and no man can be proved to have so written that he ought to please us better than he does. Yet no critic, and few ordinary readers, are content to register without comment the uncorrupted verdict of their palate. Deliberate judgements have, as a fact, been passed upon Racine. What they point to, when we have discounted the inattention, the inconsequence, or the mere prepossessions of the writers, is a conflict of traditions. Difficulties of a kind that may fairly be called national stand in the light of English readers when they turn from their own dramatic poets to explore that other continent of French tragedy. They may bring perhaps an open mind to the discovery, but not a vacant memory nor an unprejudiced ear. They are bred to a habit of poetical speech which the French manner contradicts at many points; which governs their expectation, and may easily prepare their disappointment. Their own playwrights of the great period have accustomed them to a higher temperature of language and to a freer solicitation of the senses. They are apt

to think feverish and coloured words essential to any poetry which deals with human passion; nor do they readily imagine mortal issues cramped within the walls of an antechamber that seems to open no windows on the world. It is besides for many an English reader a disillusion to find in Racine no sublime irrelevance, no fantasy, no pathetic symptoms of metaphysical incertitude.

Where these differences and others no less traditional are felt, there may be no positive aversion, but there will always be at first an estrangement, for which there is no help but through a patient initiation. Few Englishmen are ready to taste the excellence of Racine before they have learned at least that the drama which he brought to its perfection is not a parody of the Greek, but one of the great autonomous types of Western art, developed gradually in an indissoluble collaboration of theory and accident, of genius with the social sense. To trace French tragedy to its national origin is to find the starting-point of the divergence between us and our neighbours in dramatic ideals; and to trace it only as far back as Schelandre or Rotrou or Tristan is to be startled very often by a romantic luxuriance of invention that reminds us of the Jacobeans. But undoubtedly the most precious part of Racine escapes any analysis of his antecedents. He is, for one thing, a musician; and the aptitude and the familiarity are usually wanting which make it possible to hear with intimate pleasure the music of a foreign verse. And his rarest virtue of expression is not exactness, nor propriety, but an ardour robed in discretion which most foreigners perhaps, and some of his own countrymen, do not distinguish from frigidity and 'rhetoric'. He is not what is sometimes called 'a world-poet', but peculiarly a poet of his own soil, the

flower of a certain civilization; nor do those who love him best in France seek to impose their admiration on the world at large. They know how little of him is fit for export—far less than of Shakespeare, though there is a part of Shakespeare too which Englishmen reserve tacitly out of the universal gift as being inaccessible to strangers: but when Racine is transplanted, he loses not only what is most exquisite but much that is really essential. And that, more than all the accidents of mis-translation, hasty reading, incompetent criticism, and illiberal prejudice, is the reason why the fortunes of Racine in England have been so little prosperous.

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The Taylorian Lecture

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MALHERBE

and the

Classical Reaction

in the

Seventeenth Century

By

EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.

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MALHERBE AND THE CLASSICAL REACTION

In contemplating the chart of literary history we are confronted by phenomena which more or less closely resemble those marked on the geographical map. The surface is not uniform, but diversified by ups and downs of the feature that we call taste or fashion. A special interest attaches to what may be described as the watersheds of literature, the periods which display these changes of direction in thought and language. I propose to bring before you briefly some characteristics of one of the most saliently marked of all these points of alteration, that which led irresistibly and imminently to the classical school, as it is called, in France, and from France ultimately to the whole of Europe. Before doing so, I must draw your attention to the fact that while most of us are led to give special heed to movements which tend, like the Romantic renaissance of poetry in England two centuries later, to the emancipation and even the revolution of literature, that of which I am about to speak was deliberately introduced in the interests of law and order, and was in all its features conservative, and, if you choose to call it so, retrogressive. It did not aim at enlarging the field of expression, but at enclosing it within rules, excluding from it eccentricities and licentious freaks, and rendering it subservient to a rigorous discipline. In this University, where the practice of poetry is now

conducted with so much ardour and with such audacity of experiment, you may or may not, as you please, see any parallel between the condition of France in 1595 and our own condition to-day. My purpose is, with your leave, to describe the former without criticizing the latter.

The sixteenth century had been a period of great activity in the literature of France, where the interaction of two vast forces, the Renaissance and the Reformation, had introduced wholly new forms of expression into the language. Prose had started from its mediaeval condition into full modernity in Calvin, and then in Montaigne. In poetry, with which we are concerned to-day, there had existed since 1550 the brilliant and feverish army of versifiers who accompanied Ronsard, 'the Prince of Poets', and claimed with him to have created out of the rude elements of the Middle Ages a literary art which linked modern France directly with ancient Greece. While England was still languishing under the early Tudors, and Italy had grown weary of her burst of chivalrous epic, France gave the world the spectacle of a society palpitating with literary ambition. Ronsard's magnificent audacity had conquered for poetry, an art which had hitherto enjoyed little honour in France, the foremost position in the world of mental activity. Verse, which had been treated as a butterfly skipping from flower to flower, was now celebrated by the Pléiade as a temple, as a sunrise, as the apotheosis of the intellect. Immensely flattered by being suddenly lifted to the status of a priesthood, all the budding versifiers of France, who a generation earlier would have withered into insignificance, expanded into affluent and profuse blossom. By the year 1560 it was 'roses, roses all the way', but the misfortune was that the flowers were foreign, had been transplanted from Greece and Rome

and Italy, and were not really native to the soil of France.

During the next generation, under conditions with which we have no time to occupy us to-day, there was a steady, indeed an almost precipitous decline in the quality of French verse. If we turn to our own literature of half a century later, we see a parallel decline in the drama down from Shakespeare to Shirley and the later disciples of Ben Jonson. We all know how disconcerting it is to pass from the sheer beauty of the great Elizabethans to the broken verse and the mixture of flatness and violence of the lesser poets of the Commonwealth. But in France the decadence had been still more striking, because of the extremely high line adopted by Ronsard and Du Bellay in their prose manifestos. The doctrine of the Pléiade had been as rigorous and lofty as a creed in literature could well be, and it rose to an altogether higher plane than was dreamed of by the English critics half a century later. No dignity, no assurance of high and pure poetic resolution could surpass the apparent aim of the manifestoes of 1549. Frenchmen, it seemed, had nothing to do but follow these exalted precepts and to produce the most wonderful poetry which the world had seen since the days of Pindar and Sappho. We cannot to-day enter into the question why these high hopes were almost immediately shattered, except so far as to suggest that excellent principles are sometimes insufficient to produce satisfactory practice. We have to look abruptly this afternoon into the conditions of French poetry in the last years of the sixteenth century, and to realize that those conditions had brought French literature to a point where reform was useless and revolution was inevitable.

There was no slackening—and I ask your particular attention to this fact—there was no slackening in the popularity of the poetic art. There existed, in 1595, as great a crowd of versifiers as had been called forth fifty years earlier by the splendour of the Pléiade. A feature of poetic history which is worthy of our notice is that an extreme abundance of poetical composition is by no means necessarily connected with the wholesomeness and vigour of the art at that moment. There was a crowd of poets in France during the reign of Henri IV, but they were distinguished more by their exuberance and their eccentricity than by their genius. I shall, in a few moments, endeavour to give you an idea of their character. In the meantime, let us be content to remark that the exquisite ideals of the Pléiade had degenerated into extravagant conventionality, into which an attempt was made to infuse life by a spasmodic display of verbal fireworks. The charm of sobriety, of simplicity, was wholly disregarded, and the importance of logic and discipline in literature ignored and outraged. The earlier theory, a very dangerous one, had been that poetry was the language of gods rather than of men, that it was *grandiloquentia*, an oracular inspiration. Being above mankind in its origin, it was not for mortal men to question its authority. It possessed a celestial freedom, it was emancipated from all rules save what it laid down for itself. Let us see what was the effect of this arrogance.

The scope of imaginative literature as practised by the Pléiade had been curiously narrow, so much so that it is difficult to distinguish the work of different hands except by the dexterity of the technique. The odes and pastorals of the lesser masters are just like those of Ronsard, except that Ronsard is very much more skilful.

But by the close of the century there was a wide divergence between the various poets in their themes and their points of view. Two of them greatly excelled their contemporaries in eminence and popularity, and these two were as unlike each other in substance as it was easy for them to be. The elder of these two was Salluste du Bartas, a writer whose quartos are now allowed to gather dust on the shelves, and who, when he died in 1590, was, with the exception of Tasso, the most eminent European writer of verse. His influence on English poetry in the next generation was immense. Translations of his works by Joshua Sylvester and others had begun to appear before his death, and were extremely popular. Du Bartas possessed qualities of intellect and art which are by no means to be despised, but his taste was execrable. He wished to create a national religious poetry on a large scale, and he has been called the 'Milton manqué de la France'. Du Bartas is all relinquished to evangelical and moral exhortation, and his immense *Les Semaines*, besides being one of the longest, is the most unblushingly didactic encyclopaedia of verse that was ever put forth as a poem. He had a very heavy hand, and he sowed with the whole sack. Our own Bishop Joseph Hall of Norwich, who called him 'some French angel, girt with bays', described Du Bartas as—

> The glorious Sallust, moral, true, divine,
> Who, all inspirèd with a holy rage,
> Makes Heaven his subject, and the earth his stage.

In his own time his myriad admirers preferred him above 'golden Homer and great Maro'. His earnestness and his cleverness—among other things he was the first man after the Renaissance to see that the obsession of the heathen gods was ridiculous in a Christian

literature—his abundance and his vehemence, made Du Bartas a very formidable figure in the path of any possible reform.

As an instance of the violence of fancy and gaudy extravagance of language which had become prevalent with the decline of the Pléiade, I will now present to you what I select as a favourable, not a ridiculous, example of the art of Du Bartas. He wishes to paraphrase the simple statement in Genesis that, on the fourth day, God set the stars in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth. This is how he does it:

> Even as a peacock, prickt with love's desire,
> To woo his mistress, strutting stately by her,
> Spreads round the rich pride of his pompous vail,
> His azure wings and starry-golden tail,
> With rattling pinions wheeling still about,
> The more to set his beauteous beauty out,—
> The Firmament, as feeling like above,
> Displays his pomp, pranceth about his love,
> Spreads his blue curtain, mixt with golden marks,
> Set with gilt spangles, sown with glistening sparks,
> Sprinkled with eyes, speckled with tapers bright,
> Powdered with stars streaming with glorious light,
> To inflame the Earth the more, with lover's grace
> To take the sweet fruit of his kind embrace.

Our first impression of such a passage as this is one of admiration of its colour and of its ingenuity. It is more than rich, it is sumptuous; the picture of the wheeling peacock is original and brilliantly observed. But there commendation must cease. What could be meaner or less appropriate than to compare the revolution of the starry firmament as it proceeded from its Creator's hands with the strut of a conceited bird in a poultry-yard? The works of Du Bartas are stuffed full with these strained and fantastic similes, his surface sparkles with the glitter of tinsel and pinchbeck. At every turn

something majestic reminds him of an embroidery, of a false jewel, of something picturesque and mean. The planets, in their unison, are like the nails in a cart-wheel; when darkness comes on, heaven is playing at blind man's buff; the retreat of the armies of the King of Assyria reminds the poet of a gamekeeper drawing his ferret. He desires the snow to fall that it may 'perriwig with wool the bald-pate woods'. All is extravagant and false, all is offensive to the modesty of nature.

Du Bartas is stationed at the left wing of the army of poets. The right is held by Philippe Desportes, whose name has recently been made familiar to us by Sir Sidney Lee's investigations into the extraordinary way in which his works were pillaged in his lifetime by our Elizabethan sonneteers. Even Shakespeare seems to have read, and possibly imitated, Desportes's *Amours de Diane.* The producer in vast quantities of a kind of work which is exactly in the fashion of the moment is sure of a wide popular welcome, and the cleverness of Desportes was to see that after the death of Ronsard French taste went back on the severity of Du Bellay's classicism, and returned to the daintiness and artificial symmetry of the Petrarchists. It has been said that to the Italians of the sixteenth century Petrarch had become what Homer was to the Greeks and Virgil to the Latins. He was the unquestioned leader, the unchallenged exemplar. This infatuation, which spread through Europe, is of importance to us in our inquiry to-day, for Petrarch was really the worm, the crested and luminous worm, at the root of sixteenth-century poetry. It was extremely easy to imitate the amorous conceits of the Italian imitators of Petrarch, and of these imitators in France by far the most abundant, skilful, and unwearying was Philippe Desportes, to whom Petrarch's ingenious elocution

appeared, as it appeared to all the critics of Europe, 'pure beauty itself'. By the close of the century it was no longer the greater Italians, such as Francesco Molza, who represented at its height the victorious heresy of Petrarchism, it was a Frenchman, of whom our own great lyrist, Lodge, in his *Margarite of America* in 1596, wrote 'few men are able to second the sweet conceits of Philippe Desportes, whose poetical writings are ordinarily in everybody's hand'. Desportes exercised over the whole of Europe an authority which surpassed that of Tennyson over the British Empire at the height of his reputation.

Here, then, was another and still more formidable lion couched at the gate of poetry to resist all possible reform. The career of Desportes had been one of unbroken prosperity. He had become, without an effort, the wealthiest and the most influential person of letters of his time. His courtly elegance had enabled him to be all things to all men, and although a priest of unblemished character, he had attended one Valois king after another without betraying his inward feelings by a single moral grimace. He had found no difficulty in celebrating the virtues of Henri III, and the anecdote about him that is best known is that he had been rewarded with an abbey for the homage of a single sonnet. He had exaggerated all the tricks of his predecessors with a certain sweetness and brilliance of his own, which had fascinated the polite world. The best that can be said of Desportes is that he was an artificer of excellent skill, who manufactured metrical jewellery by rearranging certain commonplaces, such as that teeth are pearls, that lips are roses, that cheeks are lilies, that hair is a golden network. But I will give you his own statement of his aim, not attempting to paraphrase his

remarkable language. Desportes gives the following account of his ambition:

> I desire to build a temple to my chaste goddess. My eye shall be the lamp, and the immortal flame which ceaselessly consumes me shall serve as candle. My body shall be the altar, and my sighs the vows, and I will intone the service in thousands and thousands of verses.

What a ridiculous confusion of imagery! Here we have a man whose body is an altar, and whose eye—one of whose eyes—is a lamp, and whose passion is the candle in that lamp, and whose mouth and throat are detached from his body, and are preforming miracles in the vicinity. This is to take Desportes at his worst, and it is only fair to admit that the reader who winnows the vast floor of his work will find some grains of pure gold left. But the mass of these sonnets and odes and madrigals is extraordinarily insipid and cold, the similes are forced and grotesque, and everywhere pedantry takes the place of passion. When there is beauty it is artificial and affected, it is an Alexandrine beauty, it is the colour of the dying dolphin.

Such was the poetry which occupied the taste of France at the close of the sixteenth century, and whether its form was brief and amorous, as in the sonnets of Desportes, or long-winded and hortatory, as in the sacred epics of Du Bartas, it was uniformly exaggerated, lifeless, and incorrect. In all its expressions it was characterized by an abuse of language, and indeed, in the hands of the poets of the late Valois kings, the French tongue was hurrying down to ruin. One curious vice consisted in the fabrication of new phrases and freshly coined composite words. Of these latter, some one has counted no fewer than 300 in the writings

of Du Bartas alone, and Professor Paul Morillot has observed that the licence which the poets of that age indulged in has been the cause of subsequent poverty in that direction, French having received and rejected such a glut of new and useless words as to have lost all appetite for additions of vocabulary. Another vice of the period was the ceaseless cultivation, in season and out of season, of a sort of antithetical wit. The sincerity of nature was offended at every turn by the monstrous cleverness of the writer, who evidently was thinking far more about himself than about his subject. Here is an example:

Weep on, mine eyes, weep much, ye have seen much,
And now in water let your penance be,
Since 'twas in fire that you committed sin,

and so on, with wearisome iteration of the hyperbole. We were to suffer from the same disease fifty years later, when a great English poet, capable of far nobler things, was to call the eyes of St. Mary Magdalene

> Two walking baths, two weeping motions,
> Portable and compendious oceans.

An excellent grammarian, M. Ferdinand Brunot, has remarked that at the end of the sixteenth century a lawless individualism—and in this term he sums up all the component parts of literature, style, grammar, treatment, and tone—had set in; that everybody had become a law to himself; and that the French language was suffering from the incessant disturbance caused by 'the fantastic individuality of writers' both in prose and verse.

This chaotic state of things, which threatened French literature with anarchy and French logic with bankruptcy, was brought to a stand-still and successfully confronted

by the energy and determination of a single person. I recollect no other instance in the history of literature in which one individual has contrived to stem the whole flood of national taste. Of course, an instinct of French lucidity and reasonableness must have been ready to respond to the doctrine of the new critic, yet it is none the less certain that through the early years of the struggle there remains no evidence of his having been supported by any associate opinion. I dare say you recollect a famous Japanese print which represents a young lady standing on the edge of a cliff, and gazing calmly out to sea while she restrains the action of a great plunging horse by simply holding one of her feet down upon the reins. In the same way the runaway Pegasus of France was held, and was reduced to discipline, by the almost unparalleled resolution of a solitary man. This was François Malherbe, whose name, but perhaps very little else, will be familiar to you. I hope to show you that this poet, by the clearness of his vision and his rough independence, brought about a revolution in literature which was unparalleled. He cut a clear stroke, as with a hatchet, between the sixteenth century and all that came after it down to the romantic revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and he did this by sheer force of character. Malherbe was not a great poet, but he was a great man, and he is worthy of our close consideration.

François Malherbe was a Norman; there is a hint of the family having come from Suffolk, in which case the name may have been Mallerby, but we need not dwell on that. His parents were Calvinists, and he was born at Caen in 1555. This was, you observe, between the births of Spenser and Shakespeare; and Rabelais was just dead. Cervantes was eight years old, Lope de Vega

was to be born seven years later. We ought to notice these dates: they give us a sense of what was preparing in Europe, and what was passing away; a great period of transition was about to expand. Until he was thirty years of age Malherbe appears to have taken no interest whatever in poetry; he was a soldier, a military secretary, a man of business. Then he went to live in Provence, where he read the Italian verse fashionable in his day, and began to imitate it. The kindest and most enthusiastic of his later disciples told Tallemant that Malherbe's early poems were 'pitiful'. We can judge for ourselves, since at the age of thirty-two he published a paraphrase, or rather a series of selections from Tansillo's *Lagrime di San Pietro*. The bad poets of the age were lachrymose to the last degree. Nothing but the honour of addressing you to-day would have induced me to read these 'Tears of St. Peter'. I have done so, and have even amused myself by paraphrasing some of them, but these I will not inflict upon you. It is sufficient to assure you that up to the age of forty the verses of Malherbe were not merely, as Racan put it, pitiful, but marred by all the ridiculous faults of the age. After all, I must give you a single example. This is translated literally from 'The Tears of St. Peter':

Aurora, in one hand, forth from her portals led,
Holds out a vase of flowers, all languishing and dead;
And with the other hand empties a jar of tears;
While through a shadowy veil, woven of mist and storm,
That hides her golden hair, she shows in mortal form
All that a soul can feel of cruel pains and fears.

At what moment Malherbe observed that this was a detestable way of writing, and conceived the project of a great reversal of opinion, we do not know. His

early life, and just that part of it on which we should like light to be thrown, remains impenetrably obscure. But we do know that when he arrived in Paris he had formulated his doctrine and laid out his plan of campaign. At Aix-en-Provence he had been admitted to the meetings of a literary society, the chief ornament of which was the celebrated orator and moralist Du Vair, who ought perhaps to be considered as in some directions the master of Malherbe. The ideas of Du Vair have been traced in some of Malherbe's verses, and the poet afterwards said, in his dictatorial way, 'There is no better writer in our language than M. Du Vair.' It was probably the dignity of the orator's attitude and the severity of his taste in rhetoric which encouraged the poet to adopt a similar lucidity and strenuousness in verse. The two men, who were almost exactly of the same age, may perhaps be most safely looked upon as parallel reformers, the one of French verse, the other of French prose.

Few things would be more interesting to us, in our present mood, than to know how Malherbe, arriving in Paris at the mature age of fifty, set about his revolution. He found the polite world tired of frigid conceits and extravagant sentimentality, above all tired of the licence of the poets and the tricks which they were taking with the French language. There was undoubtedly a longing for order and regularity, such as invariably follows a period of revolutionary lawlessness, but no one was giving this sentiment a voice. What was wanted after such a glut of ornament and exuberance was an arbiter and tyrant of taste who should bring poetry rigidly into line with decency, plainness, and common sense, qualities which had long been thought unnecessary to, and even ridiculously incompatible with, literature of a high order.

All this we may divine, but what is very difficult to understand is the mode in which Malherbe became the recognized tyrant of taste. It was not by the production, and still less by the publication, of quantities of verse composed in accordance with his own new doctrine. Malherbe had hesitated long in the retirement of the country, waiting to be summoned to Court. Somehow, although he had published no book and can scarcely have been known to more than a handful of persons, he had a few powerful friends, and among them, strange to say, three poets whose work was characteristic of everything which it was to be Malherbe's mission to destroy. These were the Cardinal Du Perron, Bertaut, and Vauquelin de la Fresnaye. They formed the van of the poetical army of the moment, and it is a very curious thing that these three remarkable writers, each of whom remained faithful to the tradition of Ronsard, should have welcomed with open arms the rebel who was to cover Ronsard with ridicule. With a divine simplicity, they opened the wicket and let the wolf in among the sheep. They urged the King to invite Malherbe to Court, and, when His Majesty delayed, Malherbe very characteristically did not wait for a summons. He came to Paris of his own accord in 1605, was presented to Henri IV, and composed in September of that year the long ode called a 'Prayer for the King on his going to Limoges'. This is the first expression of classical verse in the French language.

In those days the intelligent favour of the King did more for a reputation than a dozen glowing reviews in the chief newspapers will do to-day. We must give credit to Henri IV for the promptitude with which he perceived that the cold new poetry, which must have sounded very strangely on his ears accustomed to the

lute of Desportes and the trumpet of Du Bartas, was exactly what was wanted in France. He himself had laboured to bring back to this country, distracted as it had been in its late political disorders, the virtues of law, logic, and discipline. He recognized in this grim, middle-aged Norman gentleman the same desires, but directed to the unity and order of literature. A recent French historian has pointed out that 'the very nature of Malherbe's talent, its haughty, solemn, and majestic tone, rendered him peculiarly fitted to become the official and, as it were, the impersonal singer of the King's great exploits, and to engrave in letters of brass, as on a triumphal monument, the expression of public gratitude and admiration'. Malherbe, as has been said, was appointed 'the official poet of the Bourbon dynasty'.

The precious correspondence with his Provençal friend Peiresc, which Malherbe kept up from 1606 till his death in 1628, a correspondence which was still unknown a hundred years ago, throws a good deal of light upon the final years of the poet, and in particular on the favour with which he was entertained at court. There are more than 200 of these letters, which nevertheless, like most such collections at that age, succeed in concealing from us the very facts which we are most anxious to hear about. Thus, while Malherbe expatiates to Peiresc about queens and princes, he tells us nothing, or next to nothing, about the literary life in which we know that he made so disconcerting a figure. But that most enchanting of gossips, Tallemant des Réaux, has preserved for us an anecdote of a highly illuminating nature. We have seen that the supremacy in French poetry had been held for many years by Philippe Desportes, who was now approaching the close of a long life of sumptuous success. It could not be a matter

of indifference to the last and most magnificent of the Ronsardists that an upstart, till now unheard of, should suddenly be welcomed at court. He desired his nephew, Mathurin Régnier—himself a man of genius, but not in our picture to-day—he desired Régnier to bring this M. de Malherbe to dinner. They arrived, but were late, and dinner stood already on the table. The old Desportes received Malherbe with all the politeness conceivable, and said that he wished to give him a copy of the new edition of his 'Psalms', in which he had made many corrections and additions. Such a compliment from the acknowledged head of French poetry was extreme, but Malherbe had already made up his mind to bring down the reputation of Desportes with a crash, as Samson destroyed the gates of Dagon in Gaza. Desportes was starting to go upstairs to fetch the book, when Malherbe in rough country fashion (*rustiquement*) told him he had seen it already, that it was not worth while to let his soup grow cold, for it was likely to be better than his 'Psalms' were. Upon this they sat down to dinner at once, but Malherbe said nothing more, and when dinner was done he went away, leaving the host heart-broken and young Régnier furious. This must have been very soon after Malherbe's arrival in Paris, for Desportes died in 1606.

All that has been recorded of the manners and conversation of Malherbe tends to explain this story. He could be courtly and even magnificent, and he had a bluff kind of concentrated politeness, when he chose to exercise it, which was much appreciated by the royal family. He was a tall, handsome man, with keen eyes, authoritative and even domineering, generally silent in society, but ready to break in with a brusque contradiction of what somebody else was saying. He was a

scorner of human frailty, believing himself to be above the reach of all emotional weakness. The violent force, which burned arrogantly in his spirit, comes out in everything which is preserved about him, in his verses, in his letters, in the anecdotes of friends and enemies. His retorts were like those of Dr. Samuel Johnson, but without the healing balsam of Johnson's tenderness. There was nothing tender about Malherbe, and we may admit that he could not have carried out his work if there had been. His intellectual conscience was implacable; he allowed nothing in the world to come between him and his inexorable doctrine. When he learned that the Vicomtesse d'Auchy (Charlotte des Ursins), the 'Caliste' of his own verses, had been encouraging a poet of the old school, he went to her house, pushed into her bedroom, and slapped her face as she lay upon her bed.

Tallemant tells us that 'meditation and art made a poet' of Malherbe, *non nascitur sed fit*. At no time did he learn to write with ease, and after so many years spent in the passionate cultivation of the Muse, his poetical writings are contained in as narrow a compass as those of Gray, who confessed that his 'works' were so small that they might be mistaken for those of a pismire. Malherbe had long pauses during which he seemed to do nothing at all except meditate and lay down the law. Balzac, who was one of those young men in whose company he delighted, declares that whenever Malherbe had written a thousand verses he rested for ten years. All this was part of a studied frugality. The Ronsardists and their followers had been lavish in everything; they had poured out floods of slack verse, loose in construction, faulty in grammar. If a slight difficulty presented itself to them, they evaded

it, they leaped over it. Having no reverence for the French language, they invented hideous and reckless words, they stretched or curtailed syllables, in order to fit the scansion. There is recorded a saying of Malherbe which is infinitely characteristic. When he was asked what, in fact, was his object in all he was doing, he replied that he proposed 'to rescue French poetry from the hands of the little monsters who were dishonouring it'. The glorious Desportes, the sublime Du Bartas, the rest of the glittering and fashionable Petrarchists of Paris, what were they in the eyes of this implacable despot of the new intellectual order? They were simply 'little monsters' who were 'dishonouring' what he worshipped with a fanatic zeal, the language of France.

When we turn to his own poetry, we see what there was in it which fascinated the opening seventeenth century. After all the tortures and the spasms, the quietude of it was delicious. If you go to Malherbe now, you must learn to put aside all your romantic preoccupations. His verse is very largely concerned with negations: it is *not* ornamented, it is not preposterous, it is not pedantic. It swept away all the insincere imagery and all the violent oddities of the earlier school. For example, Bertaut had written, wishing to explain his tears:

> By the hydraulic of mine eyes
> The humid vapours of my grief are drawn
> Through vacuums of my sighs.

Desportes had talked of a lover who was 'intoxicated by the delectation of the concert of the divine harmony' of his mistress. All this preciousness, all this affectation of the use of scientific terms in describing simple emotions, was the object of Malherbe's ruthless disdain. Ronsard had said, 'The more words we have in our

language, the more perfect it will be'. Malherbe replied, 'No, certainly not, if they are useless and grotesque words, dragged by the hair of their heads out of Greek and Latin, an outrage on the purity of French grammar'. He advised his disciples to eject the monstrous creations of the neo-Hellenes, and to go down to the quays of Paris and listen to the dock-labourers. They used genuine French words which ought to be redeemed from vulgar use, and brought back to literary service.

The existing poems of Malherbe, written at intervals during the last twenty years of his life, are largely pieces of circumstance. They are odes on public events, such as the retaking of Marseilles, the official journeys of the King, the regency of the Queen Mother, and the alliance between France and Spain. They are elegies on the deaths of private persons, a subject on which Malherbe expatiates with the utmost dignity and solemnity. They are sonnets, very unlike the glittering rosy gimcracks of the preceding generation, but stiff with stately compliment and colourless art. There is no exact English analogue to the poetry of Malherbe, because in the seventeenth century whenever English verse, except in the hands of Milton, aimed at an effect of rhetorical majesty, its stream became clouded. We may observe the case of Cowley, who, I think, had certainly read Malherbe and was influenced by him, in spite of the diametrical views they nourished with regard to the merit of Pindar. Cowley, at his rare and occasional best, has the same serious music, the same clear roll of uplifted enthusiasm, the same absolute assurance as Malherbe. He has the same felicity in his sudden and effective openings. But there is too frequently confusion, artifice, and negligence in Cowley. In Malherbe all is perfectly translucent, nothing turbid is

allowed to confuse the vision, no abuse of wit is left to dazzle the attention or trip up steadily advancing progress of thought. It is not easy to give an impression in English of the movement of this clear and untrammelled advance. But here are a couple of stanzas from the 1611 Ode to the Queen Regent on occasion of the King's Mediterranean expedition:

Ah! may beneath thy son's proud arm down fall
The bastions of the Memphian wall,
And from Marseilles to Tyre itself extend
His empire without end.

My wishes, p'rhaps, are wild; but—by your leave—
What cannot ardent prayer achieve?
And if the gods reward your service so
They'll pay but what they owe.

By general consent the crown of Malherbe's poetic genius is the famous 'Consolation to Monsieur Du Périer on the death of his daughter'. It contains the best-known line of Malherbe—

Et, Rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses,

about which I would merely say that it is one of those accidental romantic verses which occur here and there in all the great classical poets. There are several in Pope, where they are no more characteristic of his general style than is this of Malherbe's. So far from being the chief line in the poem, it is, in spite of its beauty, the least important to us in our present inquiry. The 'Consolation' consists of twenty-one stanzas, written long after the sad event of the death of the young lady, whose name, by the way, was not Rose, but Marguerite. The advice which the poet gives to the stricken father is stoical and Roman. Weary yourself no more with these useless and prolonged lamentations; but hence-

forth be wise, and love a shadow as a shadow, and extinguish the memory of extinguished ashes. The instances of Priam and Alcides may seem to have little in them to cheer Du Périer, but we must remember that antiquity was held a more sacred authority three hundred years ago than it is now. Malherbe, with great decorum, recalls to Du Périer the fact that he himself has lost two beloved children. The poor man under his thatched roof is subject to the laws of death, nor can the guard on watch at the gates of the Louvre protect our kings against it. To complain of the inevitable sacrifice, and to lose patience with Providence, is to lack wisdom. The only philosophy which can bring repose to a heart bereaved is implicit submission to the will of God.

All this may not seem very original, but it is exquisitely phrased, and it is sensible, dignified, and wholesome. There is in it a complete absence of the ornament and circumstance of death which had taken so preposterous a place in the abundant elegiac poetry of the sixteenth century. We are familiar with the grotesque and sumptuous appeals to the *macabre* which we meet with in Raleigh, in Donne, in Quarles, all the dismal trappings of the tomb and embroideries of the winding-sheet. They are wholly set aside by Malherbe, whose sonnet on the death of his son is worthy of special study. This young man, who was the pride of the poet's life, was killed in a duel, or, as the father vociferously insisted, murdered by a treacherous ruffian. Malherbe made the courts ring with his appeals, but he also composed a sonnet, which is a typical example of his work. It is not what we should call 'poetical', but in clearness, in force, in full capacity to express exactly what the author had in mind to say, it is perfect. We

seem to hear the very cry of the fierce old man shrieking for revenge on the slayer of his son. The sonnet was composed some time after the event, for the whole art of Malherbe was the opposite of improvisation. One amusing instance of his deliberate method is to be found in the history of his ode to console President Nicolas de Verdun on the death of his wife. Malherbe composed his poem so slowly, that while he was writing it the President widower not merely married a second time, but died. The poet, with consummate gravity, persisted in his task, and was able to present the widow with the consolation which her late husband should have received after the death of her predecessor.

During thirty years of growing celebrity, Malherbe fought for his doctrine. He had but slowly become a convert to his own laws, but when once they were clearly set out in his brain, he followed them scrupulously, and he insisted that the world should obey them too. It seems a strange thing that it was the young men who followed him first and with most enthusiasm, until the fashionable ladies of Paris began to compete with one another in support of the classical doctrine, and in repudiation of their old favourite Desportes, whose fame came down clattering in a single night, like Beckford's tower at Fonthill. Malherbe brought poetry into line with the Court and the Church, in a decent formality. Largely, as is always the case in the history of literature, the question was one more of language than of substance. Take, for example, the 'Stanzas to Alcandre on the Return of Oranthe to Fontainebleau', and you will find them as preposterous in sentiment, as pretentious and affected in conception, as any sonnet of Desportes, perhaps more so, but their diction is perfectly simple and graceful, and they are composed in

faultless modern French. Long before Molière was born Malherbe was in the habit of reading his verses to an old servant, and if there was a single phrase which gave her difficulty, he would scrupulously revise it.

He was supported by a sublime conviction of his own value. It was a commonplace in all the poetical literature of the sixteenth century to claim immortality. Desportes had told his mistress that she would live for ever like the Phoenix, in the flame of his sonnets. We all remember Shakespeare's boast that 'not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme'. But no one was ever more certain of leaving behind him a lasting monument than Malherbe. He said, addressing the King:

All pour their praise on you, but not with equal hand,
For while a common work survives one year or two,
What Malherbe writes is stamped with immortality.

The self-gratulation at the close of the noble 'Île de Ré' ode is quite disconcerting. In this case, also, he reminds the King that

The great Amphion, he whose voice was nonpareil,
Amazed the universe by fanes it lifted high;
Yet he with all his art has builded not so well
As by my verse have I.

His boast, extravagant as it sounds, was partly justified. Not in his own verse, but in that which his doctrine encouraged others to write—and not in verse only, but in prose, and in the very arrangement and attitude of the French intellect—Malherbe's influence was widespreading, was potent, and will never be wholly superseded. He found French, as a literary language, confused, chaotic, no longer in the stream of sound tradition. He cleared out the channel, he dredged

away the mud and cut down the weeds; and he brought the pure water back to its proper course. Let us not suppose that he did this completely, or that his authority was not challenged. It was, and Malherbe did not live to see the victory of his ideas. He did not survive long enough to found the Académie, or to welcome Vaugelas, the great grammarian who would have been the solace of his old age. There were still many men of talent, such as Pélisson and Agrippa d'Aubigné, who resisted his doctrine. But he had made his great appeal for order and regularity; he had wound his slug-horn in the forest. He had poured his ideas into the fertile brain of Richelieu; he had started the momentous discussions of the Hôtel Rambouillet. He had taught a new generation to describe objects in general terms, to express natural ideas with simplicity, to select with scrupulous care such words as were purely French and no others, to eschew hiatus and inversion and to purify rhyme, to read the ancients with sympathetic attention but not to pillage them. His own limitations were marked. He seems to have had no sense whatever for external nature; while he overvalued a mathematical exactitude of balance in versification and a grandiose severity in rhetoric.

But we are not attempting this afternoon to define the French Classic School, but merely to comprehend how and when it came into being. It preceded our own Classic School by the fifty years which divide Malherbe from Dryden, who, in like manner, but with far less originality, freed poetry from distortion, prolixity, and artifice. Whe Malherbe died no one could guess how prodigious would be the effect of his teaching. Indeed, at that moment, October 6, 1628, there might even seem to be a certain retrogression to the old methods, a certain neglect of the new doctrine, which seemed to

have been faintly taken up. But, looking back, we now see that at the moment of Malherbe's death, Corneille was on the point of appearing, while there were children in the nurseries who were to be La Fontaine, Pascal, Molière, Mme de Sévigné, Bossuet. Boileau and Racine were not even born, for Malherbe sowed early and the harvest came late.

The ruling passion accompanied this resolute reformer to the very close of his career. His faithful disciple, Racan, his Boswell, has drawn for us the last scene:

> One hour before he died, M. de Malherbe woke with a start out of a deep slumber, to rebuke his hostess, who was also his nurse, for using an expression which he did not consider to be correct French. When his confessor ventured to chide him, he replied that he could not help it, and that he wished to preserve up to the moment of his death the purity of the French language.

NOTE

The passage on p. 8 is quoted from Josuah Sylvister's version of 'Les Semaines'. For all the other translations the lecturer is responsible.

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SHAKESPEARE AND SPAIN

By

H. THOMAS

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SHAKESPEARE AND SPAIN

I HAVE entitled this lecture 'Shakespeare and Spain', but I shall deal with one side only of the suggested subject, Spain's influence in Shakespeare, leaving to others the question of Shakespeare's influence in Spain. I am conscious that I have chosen the lesser part, and in the end I shall concur with your criticism that a more fitting title would have been one which Shakespeare himself has provided ready to hand—Much Ado about Nothing—for I am on the side of those who think that Spain's direct influence in Shakespeare is small.

That is perhaps the general view among such as have given no special consideration to the matter. Eminent scholars hold widely differing opinions. On the one hand, Mr. Aubrey Bell boldly speaks of the Spanish language 'which Shakespeare seems to have known well', and he continues: 'Several Shakespeare plays were derived from Spanish sources, and one, *The Tempest*, followed very closely on the publication of its Spanish source. Shakespeare's allusions to Spain are very numerous, he uses Spanish phrases and gives an English garb to others.' On the other hand, Professor Fitzmaurice-Kelly cautiously admits: 'There are in Shakespeare a few touches which, with a little goodwill, may be taken as implying some acquaintance, however slight, with Spanish. It is conceivable that Shakespeare contrived to plod through some of the Spanish books which were reprinted in the Netherlands and brought thence to England; some such supposition is almost unavoidable if we choose to accept Dorer's well-known theory that *The Tempest* derives from Antonio de Eslava's *Noches de Invierno*. Were this so—the theory is not received with universal favour—we should have to assume either that Shakespeare knew enough Spanish to pick out the plot of a story from

a Spanish work, or that there existed in Shakespeare's time some French or English version, no longer known, of Eslava's dreary book.'

Those quotations represent very divergent views; but however opinions may differ, it is common ground that Shakespeare had some knowledge of Spain and the Spaniards, that a few Spanish words were among his stock-in-trade, and that he incurred certain small obligations to Spanish literature. These topics I propose to examine, with special reference to recent investigations which would make Shakespeare's knowledge of and indebtedness to Spain far greater than even Mr. Bell allows. The temporary lull in Shakespeare study due to the war affords an opportunity to review suggestions and theories which have not yet had a chance of passing through the gateway of general criticism into the realm of accepted doctrine or the limbo of rejection.

The extent of an author's acquaintance with the language of a foreign country is obviously an important factor in considering the possible influences exercised upon him by that country's literature. None of the known facts of Shakespeare's life would lead us to suppose that he had natural opportunities of acquiring Spanish, as he certainly had of acquiring French. We must turn for information to the evidence of his literary work.

As Mr. Bell says, Shakespeare 'uses Spanish phrases'. I have carefully read through Shakespeare's works in recent years, and I only find two such phrases, both of a popular character. As to the Spanish phrases to which he 'gives an English garb', I confess that I have recognized none of them, and I await enlightenment. I have, however, noted three or four words which are or may be Spanish, and which must have been on most men's lips in Shakespeare's day. I have also collected several instances of words derived from the Spanish or showing Spanish influence; but these are not of Shakespeare's own coining: they were current in the language of the time, and no one man's property more than another's.

The linguistic evidence, at any rate, hardly supports Mr. Bell's statement that Spanish was a language 'which Shakespeare seems to have known well'. How far is the further statement justified, that 'Shakespeare's allusions to Spain are very numerous'? If we were to understand Spain here simply in a geographical sense, it would be easy to prove the exact opposite; but no doubt the word is used to cover Spanish characters and Spanish commodities as well. The latter may be considered first. Falstaff's 'good bilbo' is just a variant of the 'sword of Spain', the 'Spanish sword', and the 'Spanish blade', met with elsewhere; all of which merely show that the Spanish sword had penetrated the English as well as the other markets of the world. So too had the wines of the Peninsula: the nondescript bastard, besides the canaries, charneco, and sherris, or sherris-sack, or simple ubiquitous sack, which produced the comfortable 'Spanish pouch', as Prince Henry calls it. But Shakespeare knew more about the properties of these wines than about their place of origin. Mistress Quickly was not alone in thinking canaries 'a marvellous searching wine', that 'perfumes the blood ere one can say "What's this?"' Nor is it a second-hand panegyric of sherris-sack that is put into Falstaff's mouth:

'A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain; dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble fiery and delectable shapes; which, delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second property of your excellent sherris is, the warming of the blood; which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice; but the sherris warms it and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme: it illumineth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage; and this valour comes

of sherris. So that skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work; and learning a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil, till sack commences it and sets it in act and use. Hereof comes it that Prince Harry is valiant; for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father, he hath, like lean, sterile and bare land, manured, husbanded and tilled with excellent endeavour of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris, that he is become very hot and valiant. If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack.'

A strong personal note rings in the finale.

In addition to these swords and wines, another Spanish product is alluded to in Beatrice's remark 'civil as an orange', and the mere possibility of this pun on Seville being made from the stage shows that the Spanish fruit was as well known in England as the Spanish wines—then as now. In short, Shakespeare reveals the knowledge of Spanish commodities that one would expect of the average Englishman; he is only above the average in his power of expressing his appreciation of them.

We shall find that Shakespeare's references to the country itself reveal a similar state of knowledge. The members of his audiences who did not know that Julius Caesar 'had a fever when he was in Spain' were not necessarily ignorant of Spain; they simply had not read or misread or enlarged on Plutarch. And those who were unaware that John of Gaunt 'did subdue the greatest part of Spain' were better informed than they perhaps imagined. These statements, however, occur in historical plays, and, in the sphere of history, imagination and patriotism traditionally enjoy great licence. It is to the comedies that we look for real evidence as to Shakespeare's knowledge of the Peninsula.

No one has suggested that Shakespeare ever went to Spain, and it is simply the general verdict of travellers that is crystallized in his description 'tawny Spain'. He displays indeed a greater knowledge of Spain than some of his modern editors, when he makes Helena a 'Saint

Jacques' pilgrim', 'to great Saint Jacques bound'; but no one in his day would fail to take the reference to the great mediaeval pilgrimage to the shrine of the apostle Saint James in Santiago de Compostela. It is certainly less Shakespeare's interest in the neighbouring country of Portugal than his memory of recent events and his familiarity with seafaring men that is responsible for Beatrice's simile: 'My affection hath an unknown bottom, like the bay of Portugal.' The apparently unusual expression 'the bay of Portugal' is said to be still current among sailors to denote the deep waters that wash the nose and brow of Portugal, while a disastrous English expedition to that country, the year after the Armada, may have made the allusion worth while. Shakespeare's acquaintance with the affairs of the sea, again, no doubt leads to the bare inclusion of Lisbon among the places whither Antonio has ventured his argosies; while this short list gains nothing from the mention of Aragon in *Much Ado about Nothing*, for it is simply due to the fact that Don Pedro of Aragon is one of the principal characters in the play, and he, with the whole plot, was taken over by Shakespeare from a source which goes back to Bandello.

As far as he reveals himself in his geographical references, then, Shakespeare has no special knowledge of the Peninsula; but the evidence by which we have to judge him is limited, and we may be allowed to extend it by including his references to Spanish characters.

We may ignore three unnamed Spanish characters introduced merely to add local colour or to appeal to national prejudice. Such touches show that Shakespeare knew, not so much the Peninsula, as his audiences. Yet he came into contact with real Spanish personages in two of his historical plays. The Lady Blanch of Spain, daughter of Alphonso VIII of Castile by Eleanor, sister of King John of England, figures in *King John*; but in this play Shakespeare was simply revising the work of an anonymous predecessor. In *King Henry VIII* several Spanish characters are mentioned: Queen Katharine, her father Ferdinand

the Catholic, and her 'royal nephew' the emperor Charles V, whose abdication is thought by some to have revived an interest in the story of King Lear in England. These characters, however, only enter into *King Henry VIII* through the medium of the English chronicles on which the play is based; they imply no special interest in Spanish history. Moreover, Shakespeare is only partly responsible for *King Henry VIII*. No doubt he was attracted by the moving story of Queen Katharine, but in view of the usual division of the play among possible collaborators, it would be going too far to attribute the sympathetic treatment of this stranger queen to him, uninfluenced by the aftermath of war; otherwise we might have conceived Shakespeare as working here on the same serene level as Cervantes, who drew so friendly a picture of Queen Elizabeth in *La Española Inglesa*, and we might have contrasted both with the intensely patriotic Lope de Vega, who paints the virgin queen in his *Dragontea* as 'the Scarlet Lady of Babylon'.

At the best, *King John* and *King Henry VIII* only throw light on the information respecting historic Spanish characters which Shakespeare derived from books. We must turn to the comedies if we wish to discover anything concerning his personal knowledge of Spaniards, whom he had no lack of opportunity to study in London itself. The expression 'a Spaniard from the hip upward, no doublet,' was doubtless based on personal observation of cloaked figures in the capital, and he may have drawn inspiration from one or two prominent Spaniards resident there in his day. The incentive to write *The Merchant of Venice* was perhaps provided by the anti-semitic wave that followed the sensational case of the court physician, Rodrigo Lopez, a Portuguese Jew by birth, though nominally a Christian, who was suspected of attempting to poison Queen Elizabeth. Political bias and religious prejudice amply confirming this suspicion, the unhappy man was hanged at Tyburn, where he had the additional misfortune of earning the derision of the mob by protesting that 'he loved

the queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ', which, as Camden tells us, 'from a man of the Jewish profession moved no small laughter in the standers-by'. To Mr. Martin Hume indeed, amongst other possible hints from Lopez's case, his 'sanctimonious expressions during his trial and execution would seem to suggest Antonio's words of Shylock—"the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose".' But Antonio's comment follows as naturally on Shylock's Old Testament illustration, 'When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep', as that illustration arises in the context; and Mr. Hume himself would not carry the parallel too far. Shakespeare, being an artist, certainly left any direct suggestion of a particular figure to the cruder capacities of the actors.

Rodrigo Lopez had served as interpreter to Antonio Perez, formerly Secretary of State to Philip II, and afterwards his enemy. Perez had been brought to England in 1593 by Lord Essex, and utilized to counter Spanish influences, and the court physician was suspected of conspiring to poison Perez, as well as the queen, as part of a Spanish intrigue. It seems probable that Shakespeare had Perez in his mind's eye when remodelling the Braggart of the earlier *Love's Labour's Lost* as the fantastical Spaniard Don Adriano de Armado. Mr. Hume finds confirmation of this in the correspondence in styles between Perez's letters and Armado's speeches, and he calls attention to Perez's favourite pseudonym 'el peregrino' and that most singular and choice epithet 'too peregrinate', applied to Don Adriano by Holofernes. Don Adriano's style, both in his speeches and in his letters, is at the most a very free parody of Perez's, and it is doubtfully that, for any hints taken from Perez would be superimposed on the original sketch of the Braggart, and this clearly owed something to an eccentric Italian well known in London for his strange talk some years before, the 'Phantasticall Monarke' whose 'epitaphe' appears in Churchyard's *Chance* (1580).

But we are not called upon to test the precise degree of

truth underlying these possible reflexions of contemporary figures in Shakespeare's plays. However interesting in themselves, they do not point to his having enjoyed any personal intimacy with Spaniards in London, and discussion of them is only necessary in order to avoid overlooking any evidence as to his knowledge of Spain and of Spanish.

We may summarize the results of the evidence so far collected, before passing on to the question of Shakespeare's literary borrowings from the Peninsula. Shakespeare's knowledge of Spain seems to have been that of the intelligent London citizen. He was vaguely familiar with a few historic Spanish figures, but his information concerning them was derived from English chronicles, and in itself did not particularly interest him. If he suggests acquaintance with living Spaniards, it is apparently a distant one, and throws no light on the possibility of his naturally acquiring Spanish; and the knowledge he displays of that tongue is no more than we should expect if he had 'been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps'.

We can now consider without prejudice Shakespeare's literary indebtedness to the Peninsula. What we have seen above merely warns us not to assume that Shakespeare was so familiar with Spanish that he would regularly turn to Spanish books and read them fluently and freely. We must be on our guard too against drawing rash conclusions from similarities of plot, incident, thought, or expression in Shakespeare and in Spanish literature. The great defect of the diligent source-hunter is that he so often finds what he looks for, and Shakespeare's versatile mind and fertile imagination have provided abundant scope for his activities.

It has for some time been on record that Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Twelfth Night* deal respectively with the same subjects as Lope de Rueda's *Comedia Eufemia* and *Comedia de los Engañados*, and his *Romeo and Juliet* with the same theme as Lope de Vega's *Castelvines y Monteses*.

Recently *Pericles*, which is partly Shakespeare's work, has been similarly brought into line with Gil Vicente's *Comedia de Rubena*. These are isolated facts. Shakespeare drew from the same sources as the Spanish dramatists; it is not suggested that he utilized their plays.

But there are subtler parallels between Shakespeare and Spanish literature, which, from the fact that no conscious relationship is claimed for the authors in question, serve to emphasize the danger of inferring too much from such resemblances. Professor Fitzmaurice-Kelly, besides quoting the familiar coincidence of expression whereby both Hamlet and Don Quixote state that the purpose of the drama is 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature', gives a more illuminating instance of his own: the picture of two parallel creations, Falstaff and Sancho, pursuing similar thoughts to the same conclusion, Falstaff by the King's camp near Shrewsbury soliloquizing on honour and deciding 'I'll have none of it', and Sancho under a tree outside El Toboso, reflecting on the doubtful advantages of faithful service, and concluding that 'the devil, the devil, and no one else, dragged me into this affair'. These are chance resemblances of thought and expression arising out of analogous situations, such as will frequently be found in writers like Shakespeare and Cervantes, whose minds range widely over life's activities. Christopher Sly's sudden elevation to the peerage—though the theme is not developed—recalls Sancho Panza's promotion to be governor of Barataria, and Petruchio and his horse on their way to the wedding suggest Don Quixote and Rozinante prepared for equally perilous adventures. Falstaff's threat to toss the rogue Pistol in a blanket shows that Sancho's unlucky experience might have befallen him just as easily in an English inn as in a Spanish one. Polonius in proverbial mood is reminiscent of Sancho, while Edgar, the fool, and King Lear, and Hamlet himself, vie with the Licenciado Vidriera for 'matter and impertinency mixed, reason in madness'.

But we are not limited to Cervantes, nor to situation,

thought, and expression, for parallels. In method, too, Shakespeare has Spanish counterparts. The picture of Launcelot Gobbo, holding the balance between the fiend and his conscience as to whether he shall run away from the Jew his master, has its exact parallel in the *Celestina*, though in this case Sempronio decides to remain with the love-struck Calisto. Shakespeare and the unknown author of the *Celestina* had unerring instincts for the drama of irresolution, which is almost the very negation of drama, and so one of its subtlest forms.

In style, too, Shakespeare strangely recalls past vogues in Spanish literature. Don Quixote delighted in Feliciano de Silva's long-winded romances of chivalry for their lucidity of style, and especially for such complicated conceits as 'the reason of the unreason with which my reason is afflicted so weakens my reason that with reason I murmur at your beauty', which were as pearls in his sight. He would have been equally dazzled by Romeo's 'O single-soled jest, solely singular for thy singleness!' and Richard the Second's

> Your cares set up do not pluck my cares down.
> My care is loss of care, by old care done;
> Your care is gain of care, by new care won.
> The cares I give I have, though given away;
> They tend the crown, yet still with me they stay;

while the poor gentleman might well have lain awake trying to unravel the carefully plaited reasoning of Cardinal Pandulph in *King John*. In spite of the warning against affectation which he puts in Hamlet's mouth, Shakespeare could serve 'a very fantastical banquet' of words, 'just so many strange dishes' as there were tastes, with the result that critics have recognized his gongorism before ever gongorism was.

All parallels between Shakespeare and Spanish romances of chivalry are particularly instructive in view of recent attempts to increase the English dramatist's indebtedness to these generally tedious books. As we shall see shortly, Shakespeare gives apparent evidence of knowing two of

them. At present, however, I wish to emphasize how easy it was for parallels to exist, without his having any acquaintance with the Spanish romances themselves. By his day, these books had been extensively printed in the Peninsula for nearly a century; through the medium of translations they had exercised a considerable influence elsewhere in Europe for half a century; and after such a lapse of time whatever was digestible in them had been absorbed and was circulating unidentified and unidentifiable in the general organization. Moreover they brought back to England little that had not come out of the country. England had its own romances of chivalry of older date; English history had been moulded by their spirit, and in many ways the native chronicles approximated all too closely to the romances. When Shakespeare quotes a hero of chivalry, he chooses an English one: Sir Guy or Sir Colbrand or Sir Bevis. Chivalry had become an essential part of English life; its themes and terms had saturated through to the lower classes. After the ignominious rout of himself and his companions by the phantom host whose nucleus was the Prince and Poins, Falstaff shelters himself from open shame behind a mediaeval notion vulgarized by the romances of chivalry: 'Was it for me to kill the heir-apparent? Should I turn upon the true prince? Why, thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct: *the lion will not touch the true prince.*' And chivalresque remarks are bandied round in Falstaff's rascally circles. To Falstaff, the red-nosed Bardolph is the 'Knight of the Burning Lamp', and Pistol a 'base Assyrian knight', while by a degrading extension Doll Tearsheet is to the beadle a 'she knight-errant'. It need not surprise us therefore to find in Shakespeare things that would be quite in place in a Spanish romance of chivalry, such as the boy that King Henry the Fifth and Katharine are to compound, 'that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard', or Othello's bitter cry, 'O the world hath not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side, and command him tasks.'

Hector's challenge in *Troilus and Cressida* is pure romantic chivalry: he will make good

> He hath a lady, wiser, fairer, truer,
> Than ever Greek did compass in his arms,

in lists that are frankly mediaeval:

> If any come, Hector shall honour him;
> If none, he'll say in Troy when he retires,
> The Grecian dames are sunburnt and not worth
> The splinter of a lance.

The mechanism of chivalry is of course present in the historical plays; it sometimes gives way to that of chivalresque romance. Talbot in battle is a very hero of romance; but he occurs in a play with which Shakespeare may have had little or no connexion. It is otherwise with *Cymbeline*, which is sprinkled with the commonplaces of chivalresque romance superbly told: the kidnapping of the King's two sons from the nursery; the unfolding of their royal qualities in spite of their rustic training; their impatience when danger threatens; their defeat of the conquering Romans, with their foster-father's help; their knighthood after the battle, and the subsequent discovery of their royal origin: these were hackneyed themes among the later romance-writers; they were common property in Shakespeare's time, and we need not try to connect *Cymbeline* with any particular romance of chivalry, though this has recently been attempted. The vague parallels that have been pointed out above will warn us not only to scrutinize narrowly any claims that Shakespeare borrowed incidents or expressions from Spanish literature, but to view them broadly too.

If all the claims could be substantiated which have been made in the present century alone, then Shakespeare was widely read in Spanish literature: he was familiar, through representative books, with the principal developments in early Spanish prose fiction, the didactic anecdote, the chivalresque romance, the sentimental tale, the realistic novel, the pastoral romance, and the picaresque story. The alleged evidence on which these claims are based varies from casual

reminiscences to profuse borrowings. The latter are confined to the pastoral and the chivalresque romances; the consideration of them may be deferred while we deal with the minor cases.

The earliest Spanish work that has been connected with Shakespeare is the *Conde Lucanor*, the fourteenth-century collection of apologues by Don Juan Manuel, which was first published in 1575. One of the stories told in the *Conde Lucanor*, obviously taken from an oriental source, has a similar theme to *The Taming of the Shrew*, and as late as 1909 Mr. Martin Hume was still claiming that the Shakespearian play was derived from the Spanish story. Those who have not his reason for bias will recognize the theme of both as a widespread folk-lore motive, and will simply regard the Spanish story as an interesting Shakespeare parallel. We do seem to be remotely indebted to a Spaniard for the induction to the play, a European variant —since it is based on intoxication—of another oriental motive: in whatever way the jest of 'the waking man's dream' came to be utilized on the English stage, its appearance in Europe has been traced to a letter of Juan Luis Vives, who reports it as having been practised on a drunken artisan by Philip the Good of Burgundy. Shakespeare, however, is as distantly related to Vives as he is to Don Juan Manuel, for in the induction, as in the play itself, he was merely retouching an already existing *Pleasant Conceited Historie*, based on versions of the two themes involved which were already current in this country.

It is but a vague suggestion that would bring Shakespeare into relationship with a more famous example of early Spanish fiction, the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, usually known as the *Celestina*. Professor Fitzmaurice-Kelly, who cannot be accused of rashness in these matters, thinks that the English version of the first four acts of this realistic novel in dialogue, made by Sir Thomas More's brother-in-law John Rastell, and printed by him about 1530, may have contributed something to the conception

of the two immortal lovers Romeo and Juliet, and he stresses the fact that, according to the *Stationers' Register*, there was projected a London edition of the *Celestina* in Spanish about the time when Shakespeare was preparing his play. Shakespeare may have known of the project, and something of the nature of the book, from those interested; but he had ample sources of inspiration for Romeo and Juliet in his English predecessors in the same field, Brooke and Painter. The suggested influence of the *Celestina*, while unnecessary and unprovable, remains within the realm of possibility. It involves no knowledge of Spanish on Shakespeare's part. Not so a rash attempt recently made to connect Shakespeare with Feliciano de Silva's *Segunda Celestina*, in which Dr. Joseph de Perott, a scholar in the United States, finds a parallel to the hiding of Falstaff in a buck-basket at Mistress Ford's house in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. A Portuguese girl in the Celestina's house receives a visit by appointment from a Trinitarian friar whom she has captivated by her beauty; they are interrupted by the girl's jealous and ferocious lover, and the friar is only saved from destruction by being concealed in a huge pitcher of water. Dr. Perott convinces himself that Shakespeare copied this incident, because he also finds in the *Segunda Celestina* the original of Falstaff, a serving-man equally boastful, equally white-livered in the presence of danger, and equally facile in converting a taunt to his credit; one of whose speeches might be headed, in Falstaff's words, 'the better part of valour is discretion'. Dr. Perott also sees in this man's master, a young lordling of affected speech, the germ of Don Adriano de Armado. Those who are not intent on finding a Spanish source for everything Shakespeare wrote will not readily share Dr. Perott's conviction. As we have seen, Shakespeare had models for Don Adriano in London itself. Further, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was made for Falstaff, and not Falstaff for *The Merry Wives*; he developed in the historical dramas, and is just a supreme example of an ancient literary type. Again, the concealment of the clan-

destine lover nowhere depends on written authority, and the creator of Falstaff had no need to look to Spain for the simple practical jokes played on his hero; if he had been under any such necessity, popular Spanish literature would have provided him with something much nearer to the buck-basket incident than the *Segunda Celestina* offers.

Dr. Perott is almost as reckless in trying to bring Shakespeare into association with Juan de Flores' *Historia de Grisel y Mirabella*, a representative of the sentimental tales that developed in Spain about the time the *Celestina* was written and printed. Published in English abroad in 1556, and at home thirty years later, as *The History of Aurelio and Isabella*, this story may well have been known to Shakespeare—it is known to Shakespearians as having been at one time, under a complete misapprehension, regarded as the source of *The Tempest*. Briefly, it relates the secret love-intrigue of the knight Grisel and the princess Mirabella, revealed by a servant to her father, the King of Scotland. According to the law of the country, whichever of the pair gave the other the greatest cause for love was to suffer death, and this other lifelong banishment. The difficult question as to which was the guiltier party was argued at great length, and the lady finally condemned. Dr. Perott regards this story as having influenced Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*, because here the same law prevails in Vienna, and he is absolutely convinced by the Duke's remark to Juliet in prison:

> Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.

Not being bound to find Spanish influence in *Measure for Measure*, we may treat the Duke's remark in relation to its context. In his pretended character of a friar, the Duke tells the penitent Juliet:

> I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience,
> And try your penitence, if it be sound,
> Or hollowly put on.

He then brings her to confess she loves the man who wronged her, so that their 'most offenceful act was

mutually committed'. It is robbing Shakespeare of his insight, and the Duke's remark of its subtlety, to pretend that the conclusion, 'Then was your sin of heavier kind than his', was inspired by the *Historia de Grisel y Mirabella*. But Dr. Perott had already blinded himself by identifying the ordinary law of Vienna, by which the man forfeited his life for immorality, while the woman was let off lightly, with the exceptional law of Scotland, by which the guilty woman died. As a matter of fact, neither the general plot nor the particular situations of *Measure for Measure* bear any relation to the *Historia de Grisel y Mirabella*; as is well known, Shakespeare followed closely George Whetstone's play *Promos and Cassandra* of 1578.

After these strained comparisons, it is a relief to return to a modest suggestion that Shakespeare may have known the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, with which the picaresque story began in Spain about the middle of the sixteenth century, and of which two or three editions appeared in English during the last quarter of that century. A passage in *Much Ado about Nothing*, 'Ho! now you strike like the blind man: 'twas the boy that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post,' is said to recall the incident in *Lazarillo de Tormes* which terminated the youthful hero's service with his first master. He stole a piece of sausage from the blind man, and was well beaten for the offence. In revenge, he induced his master to jump across a stream head first into a stone pillar. The master is stunned, and the boy runs away from him for good. The main elements in these two cases are so similar that the above passage in Shakespeare will certainly recall the incident in *Lazarillo de Tormes* to those who have read the Spanish story. These elements, however, must formerly have occurred in conjunction often enough in real life, and the circumstances in the two cases we are considering are so different that it is reasonably certain Shakespeare was not alluding to *Lazarillo de Tormes*, but to some anecdote or incident better known to his audiences.

We reach the literature of Shakespeare's own time in

Mr. Martin Hume's claim that the dramatist was indebted to Juan Huarte's *Examen de Ingenios*, which appeared in English in 1594 and at later dates. We are told that 'this book was a very remarkable one, for it formulated a new theory of sanity, talent and madness'—sanity being the result of an equilibrium of the four humours. Of this new theory, however, Mr. Hume finds 'no traces in Shakespeare's studies of mental alienation, but that the great dramatist must have read Huarte in the translation of his friend, Carew, is obvious to any one who will read Nym's quaint talk about "humours" in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and the speech of the bastard, Edmund, in "King Lear", where he states the reasons for the mental and physical superiority of illegitimately-born children over those born in wedlock.' 'As the speech and Huarte's original are somewhat coarse', Mr. Hume refrained from quoting, and he was as discreet as he was delicate, for quotation would have revealed the fact that the indignant protest of one who 'stood in the plague of custom' had nothing in common with the cold reasoning of the scientist, except the commonplace error concerning the superiority of the love-child. As to Nym's 'quaint talk about humours', Mr. Hume must have forgotten Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, in which Shakespeare had acted; he certainly overlooked the induction to *Every Man out of his Humour*, or he would have realized that Nym's nonsensical remarks had nothing to do with Juan Huarte, but were simply another attempt

> To give these ignorant well-spoken days
> Some taste of their abuse of this word humour.

The last of these minor cases—minor only because of the obscurity that surrounds it—is the most interesting of all, for it involves the possibility of Shakespeare having come under the influence of Cervantes. Parallels between the two we have already seen, but they remain parallels and nothing more. The one chance of connecting them more closely depends on the evidence of a lost play, *The*

History of Cardenio, mentioned in the *Stationers' Register* under the late date 1653, though perhaps identical with a play performed forty years earlier. If the *Stationers' Register* is correct in ascribing this play to 'Mr. Fletcher and Shakespeare', then the latter must have known and used *Don Quixote*—which he might have read in Shelton's version—for *The History of Cardenio* could hardly fail to unfold the entangled love-stories of Cardenio and the Lady Luscinda, and Don Fernando and the fair Dorothea, whom the Knight met in the Sierra Morena. We have no means of judging the question, and so we cannot definitely say that Shakespeare knew Cervantes, yet he supplemented, unconsciously and not unworthily, the portrait which Cervantes drew of himself in the preface to his *Novelas Exemplares*, and certainly more than one Spanish Desdemona was captivated by the tale

> of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
> Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
> Of being taken by the insolent foe
> And sold to slavery.

In the above chronological *résumé* the discussion of Shakespeare's relationship to the Spanish pastoral and chivalresque romances has been deferred, because in both cases we are on firmer ground. The pastoral romance was of course not originally Spanish, but it was popularized in the Peninsula and elsewhere by Jorge de Montemôr's *Diana*. It has long been acknowledged that Shakespeare was in some way indebted to the *Diana* for part of the plot of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: Proteus' wooing of Julia by letter, with the maid Lucetta as intermediary; Julia's coquetting with the letter; Proteus' departure for the Court, followed by Julia in male attire; Julia's stay at the inn, and overhearing Proteus serenade another mistress; her service with him as a page, and employment to further his new suit; the recognition in a forest, after a scene of combat. All this is simply the story of Felix and Felismena in the second book of the *Diana*. Shakespeare

may have taken it from a lost play, *The History of Felix and Philismena*, acted at Court in 1584; but there are points which suggest that he may have known the romance: the outlaw Valerius may be called after Valerio, the name adopted by Felismena when she turned page; and the magic juice which Puck sprinkled on his victims' eyes in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* may have been suggested by the *Diana*. Even so, Shakespeare need not have had to read the romance in the original Spanish. The book seems to have been popular with translators since Barnaby Googe published a fragment from the Felix and Felismena episode in English verse three years after the appearance of the original. Bartholomew Young translated the whole work by 1582, though his version was not printed till 1598, after the date assigned to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and Shakespeare may have known the story from a manuscript copy, or from accounts given him by friends. We know, however, from Bartholomew Young himself, that others had translated the *Diana*. Among them was Sir Thomas Wilson, who translated the work in 1596, dedicating it to Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton. Later he could only find his copy of the first book, and it would be tempting to think that Shakespeare used, and retained, the second and later books, if the critics were not fairly well agreed that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* belonged to the earlier nineties. In any case, there seems to have been material enough in English on which Shakespeare could draw.

The case is different with regard to some of the Spanish romances of chivalry which have recently been much advertised as sources of Shakespeare's plays. Over a century ago, Robert Southey, fixing on the name Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*, observed that Shakespeare in this play imitated *Amadis de Grecia*—one of Feliciano de Silva's continuations of the famous romance *Amadis de Gaula*—which was not translated into English till 1693. Southey had in mind those scenes in which Prince Florizel, 'obscured with a swain's wearing', woos Perdita, just as his namesake in *Amadis de Grecia* turns shepherd

to court the temporary shepherdess Silvia. The general plot of *The Winter's Tale*, including the pastoral scenes in question, was taken over bodily by Shakespeare from Greene's romance *Dorastus and Fawnia*; but as in these pastoral scenes Greene was clearly inspired by Feliciano de Silva, Shakespeare incurs at least a second-hand indebtedness to *Amadis de Grecia*. There the matter might have been allowed to rest if Shakespeare, in altering the names of Greene's characters, had not reverted to the Spanish original (Florisel) in the case of Prince Florizel. Shakespeare must have known something about the relationship of Greene's *Dorastus and Fawnia* to *Amadis de Grecia*. Did he learn the name of Dorastus' prototype from better informed friends, or had he himself read *Amadis de Grecia*, which he might have done in the French version? In the latter case, did he confine himself to the change in the name, or did he borrow further from the Spanish romance? Southey prudently spoke of nothing more than imitation. Later writers have followed up the clue, none with greater zeal than Dr. Perott, who examined not only the few end-chapters of *Amadis de Grecia* devoted to Prince Florizel's birth and pastoral adventures, but also all the books of the *Amadis* series written by Feliciano de Silva. Besides the name Florisel, Dr. Perott points out that these books contain a bear-hunt, a genial thieving rascal, and statues called to life, all missing in Greene's romance, and he concludes that the conjunction of these in *The Winter's Tale* must be attributed to the direct influence of Feliciano de Silva. His conclusion is convincing; but the conviction is almost completely destroyed by the proofs on which the conclusion is based. Let us examine them briefly.

The bear-hunt selected by Dr. Perott is to be found in *Lisuarte de Grecia*, the seventh book of the *Amadis* romances. The Florisel episode occurs in the final chapters of the ninth book, *Amadis de Grecia*, and assuming that Shakespeare was incapable of deciding how to get rid of Antigonus without some literary precedent, he might have found it in the bear-hunt which is described in

these very chapters. Dr. Perott convinces himself that the bear-hunt in *Lisuarte de Grecia* inspired Shakespeare, because in this case the hunters in their pursuit hear 'a sad lament from a part of the mountain side washed by the sea', which is reproduced in the clown's 'O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls!' in *The Winter's Tale.* Shakespeare apparently would never have thought of making his clown utter a human cry of sympathy with shipwrecked souls unless he had read of a distressed damsel's cry for help under totally different circumstances in a chivalresque romance.

The incident of the 'statues called to life' which Dr. Perott finds 'united with' the pastoral motive also occurs in *Lisuarte de Grecia.* A princely pair were suddenly turned to marble by enchantment. A few years later they were just as suddenly restored to life, with the drawback that they could neither eat nor talk. These disadvantages could only be removed by two perfectly faithful lovers, which leads to numerous 'adventures' in a society that had departed from the high moral standard set by Amadis of Gaul. It is only by obscuring the details that this incident can be passed off as having inspired the method of Hermione's restoration in *The Winter's Tale.*

The case of the thieving rascal is somewhat different. It is not altogether impossible that Shakespeare should have taken the barest of hints for his Autolycus from Feliciano de Silva. The rascal in question, known as El Fraudador, is indeed a mounted horse-thief by profession, but he is somewhat similar in conception to Autolycus. Dr. Perott, however, is not content with vague resemblances, and strains proofs to the breaking-point to establish a close relationship between the two. He retells one of El Fraudador's tricks which Autolycus is said to have copied. A noble damsel tells a knight she meets that her brother is wounded, and begs for his help. The knight follows her to the wounded man, sets him on his horse, and gets on a tree-stump to mount behind him; but the wounded man, who is El Fraudador, and not wounded at all, rides away with the knight's horse, exhorting him to preach

a sermon from the improvised pulpit. Autolycus, it will be remembered, pretends that he has been beaten and robbed, and picks the pocket of the clown that helps him up. The pick-pocket pedlar is the more natural of the two rogues. Shakespeare may well have met him and his tricks at Stratford fairs and Warwickshire harvest-wakes; he is the less likely to have copied this incident from the Spanish romance as the book in which it is told was written out of the proper sequence, and apparently for that reason was not translated into any language. We should have to assume that Shakespeare read it in the original. This presents no difficulty to Dr. Perott, who supplies from it further convincing details: El Fraudador plays tricks on emperors and queens, yet regards himself as a true vassal, and helps on the occasion of a war, just as Autolycus, a former servant of Florizel, helps him later; both El Fraudador and Autolycus change their dress; each swindles people after warning them against himself. A single example will discover how Dr. Perott achieves this close and unnecessary parallel. On one occasion, El Fraudador, being pursued by his victims, changes dress to avoid discovery. Autolycus is persuaded to change clothes with Florizel in order that the latter may escape in disguise. The circumstances are entirely different; the only thing in common is the mere changing dress. Dr. Perott, by stripping off their leaves, would persuade us that an English oak were own brother to a Lombardy poplar. He realizes that isolated incidents which have little or no evidential value in themselves may acquire a convincing force in accumulation; he has not realized that there is all the difference in the world between the corresponding sequence of parallel events, essential and unessential, in two similar stories, which proves the relationship of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to Montemôr's *Diana*, and the fortuitous gathering of scattered incidents torn from their contexts in the different books of a long series for comparison with isolated incidents in a totally different story. The very accumulation of proof which convinces Dr. Perott will tempt others impatiently to reject his thesis. Yet one

point has escaped him which, had he noticed it, he would regard as proving that thesis beyond all doubt. Shakespeare's prince bears the same name as the hero of one of these *Amadis* romances; the hero of a later romance, in which El Fraudador occurs, is Rogel de Grecia. It may be mere coincidence that the gentleman in *The Winter's Tale* who brings the news that 'the oracle is fulfilled, the king's daughter is found', is called Rogero; but the fact is disconcerting to those who would reject Shakespeare's direct indebtedness to Feliciano de Silva.

Dr. Perott would even increase this indebtedness. He thinks that Shakespeare took the plot of *Love's Labour's Lost* from the last of Feliciano de Silva's romances, which was never translated. His abridged version stresses the points which prove Shakespeare's borrowing: an academy; an embassy; the parting of the sexes; a queen accused of violating this (caricatured by Shakespeare in the Armado-Costard-Jaquenetta episode); encounters of knights with masked ladies, and surprises on unmasking; changing of clothes; music played by Ethiopian girls; famous worthies, such as Hector, Achilles, Helen, and Polyxena, called up by magicians for the diversion of the princes. Even the abridgement of the suggested source makes it clear that if Shakespeare extracted *Love's Labour's Lost* from this entangled story of knights and magicians, he deserves greater credit than if he drew it from his own imagination. But Dr. Perott convinces himself by a subtle test, which shows that he has entered into the spirit of the play, and is young enough to 'climb over the house to unlock the little gate'. In the Spanish romance the sexes are kept a third of an hour apart; in *Love's Labour's Lost*, one mile apart. Dr. Perott soberly consulted Minsheu's Dictionary 's.v. *legua*' to discover that 'an English mile is the equivalent of one-third of an hour'! After this, it need surprise no one to find him suggesting that Shakespeare possibly utilized phrases from two of Feliciano de Silva's romances in *The Tempest* and *King Lear*.

The question of Shakespeare's borrowing from Feliciano de Silva perhaps hardly merits such a lengthy discussion,

for at the most it is only pretended that he took but a few hints from the Spanish writer. Attempts have recently been made to show that he was more deeply indebted to a smaller series of these Spanish romances, the *Espejo de Principes y Cavalleros*, a late and handy compendium of sixteenth-century chivalresque nonsense, which was translated into English as *The Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood*. The early books appeared when Shakespeare was a young man, and may have formed part of his youthful reading; the later books, with reprints of the earlier ones, came out during the period of his literary activity. The series was popular in England, and Shakespeare seems to have been familiar with it, for there is an apparent allusion to its principal hero, the Cavallero del Febo, in Falstaff's reproach of the prince: 'Indeed, you come near me now, Hal; for we that take purses go by the moon, and not by Phoebus, he "that wandering knight so fair".'

Following no doubt the clue afforded by this allusion, Dr. Perott set out to find the original from which Shakespeare drew the plot of *The Tempest*. Hitherto the honour of providing this source had been doubtfully conceded, since Edmund Dorer's time, to Antonio de Eslava's *Noches de Invierno*, a collection of tales published only a year or so before *The Tempest* was written, and not then available in any known translation. For this and other reasons scholars have sought a common source for *The Tempest* and the story from the *Noches de Invierno* that has been associated with it. Dr. Perott discovered this common source in *The Mirror of Knighthood*. I have printed elsewhere a summary of the main theme from this romance, 'ending with two happy marriages', which he published in 1905 as 'the probable source of the plot of Shakespeare's Tempest', and I described it as not very convincing. On reconsideration, I am as willing to accept it for the original plot of *Much Ado about Nothing*, which also 'ends with two happy marriages', as of *The Tempest*, and I need not burden you with it here. But Dr. Perott supplemented this main theme with two other matters more suggestive of *The Tempest*. The first is the story of a prince who

devoted himself to magic instead of to government, and after his wife's death retired to an island with his two children, a boy and a girl; the latter when grown up falls in love with the picture of a renowned knight whom the father kidnaps to keep her company. The second is the description of the island of Artimaga, named after its mistress, an old witch who worshipped the devil, and through his agency had a son, her successor from birth; the hero of the romance reaches this island after a dreadful storm, and has adventures which need not be recounted, as they bear no relationship to *The Tempest*. There are, however, precedents for other Shakespearian details. 'To the magician disarming there is an approach in *The Mirror of Knighthood*', and there are besides 'boats (often moved by magic power); storms (often conjured up by magicians); taking away a book from a magician in order to deprive him of his power; phantoms; mighty structures swallowed up; buffetting against the waves; Milon caught by a split oak; the sage waiting on people without being seen.'

Dr. Perott subsequently realized that the princely magician in *The Mirror of Knighthood* was not the elder son driven from his kingdom by a usurping younger brother, but himself a younger son who retired from public life as having no interest in the succession. The story summarized above hereby loses much of its resemblance to *The Tempest*, but Dr. Perott felt adequately compensated for this by a truly remarkable parallel: just as the kidnapped knight—who is really an emperor—stays twenty years in the magic island, so Prospero reveals his story to Miranda after a lapse of twelve years. And there are equally convincing parallels connected with the Devil's Island, which was uninhabited, but full of mysterious fires and smoke and noises: just as in *The Mirror of Knighthood* the monster Fauno was brought there from Mount Atlas, so Sycorax was transported from Algiers to the island in *The Tempest*; and just as a Spanish ship in *The Mirror of Knighthood* has a captain, so the English ship in *The Tempest* has a boatswain.

And if these parallels are not sufficient evidence of Shakespeare's borrowings, there are linguistic proofs to support them. Dr. Perott had already claimed in 1905 that 'two of the finest flowers in Miranda's wreath' had been 'culled in a Spanish garden', by which he meant that prosaic phrases in *The Mirror of Knighthood* blossomed forth into the well-known passages in *The Tempest* beginning: 'O, I have suffer'd with those I saw suffer', and 'For several virtues have I liked several women'. To these he added later the even better known passage:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep;

and about the same time he printed a list of thirteen parallel passages which reveal Shakespeare's 'verbal borrowings' from *The Mirror of Knighthood* 'in the protasis-scene of *The Tempest*'. From the suggested original 'the chariot took landing', the verbal borrowing in Ariel's 'the king's son have I landed by himself' is limited, if I am not mistaken, to the word 'the', probably as common in Shakespeare's time as now; but it is perhaps uncharitable to assume that Dr. Perott means what he says, and we should no doubt understand that Shakespeare in such cases only borrowed the general idea. Yet what idea was it that he borrowed in the above, or in the following typical examples?

The forward ship arrived in a faire and delectable island.	Here in this island we arrived.
The Emperor's ship rushed on the shore.	How came we ashore?

Shakespeare's language could not be simpler, and the entire absence of any characteristic words or phrases proves exactly the opposite of what Dr. Perott would have us believe. We are simply dealing with two authors who describe in their own words the commonplace events of the same simple theme—in this case the arrival of a ship at an island. With such 'verbal borrowings' as Dr. Perott adduces, aided by his method of selecting and piecing

together scattered incidents for comparison, one could just as easily prove that *Robinson Crusoe* or *Treasure Island*, for instance, was derived from *The Mirror of Knighthood*.

It is pleasant to turn from the scholar's reconstruction of the workings of a great creator's mind to Mr. Kipling's brilliant theory of *How Shakespeare came to write The Tempest*—and Mr. Kipling, though he modestly proclaims himself no Shakespeare scholar, has some title to speak on the point. Here we see *The Tempest* brewing from such a small beginning as the chatter of a half-tipsy sailor. Shakespeare overhears him discoursing to his neighbour in the theatre of a grievous wreck in the Bermudas. A hint from the distressed mariner is followed by a drink in an adjacent tavern and a more minute description of the island scene of the wreck, so faithfully reproduced in *The Tempest* that Mr. Kipling at once recognized the very spot three hundred years afterwards. With the sailor dipping to a deeper drunkenness, the story became more graphic: discipline had melted under the strain, and some of the revolted crew learned what it meant to wander without officers on a devil-haunted beach of noises. By the time the sailor was without reservation drunk, Shakespeare had quite sanely and normally come by the setting and some of the incidents of *The Tempest*, and his informant was ripe for immortalization as the drunken butler Stephano. Some vaguely remembered story of Italy was encased in the setting so naturally acquired; and in this connexion it is curious to find Mr. Kipling reviving the old heresy of *The History of Aurelio and Isabella*: his library was not sufficiently up to date to suggest Eslava's *Noches de Invierno*, much less *The Mirror of Knighthood*.

Dr. Perott is not content merely to refer *The Tempest* to this latter. He finds in it the inspiration for ideas and incidents in several other plays. In some cases indeed he appears to offer us nothing more than parallels, but we feel all the time that he implies more than he actually states. The most plausible of his suggestions—though I can accept none of them—is that Margaret's impersonation

of Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing* was copied directly from *The Mirror of Knighthood*, rather than from other available sources; but I have dealt with this elsewhere, and need not trouble you with it here. Nor is it necessary for me at this stage to do more than enumerate the other supposed borrowings from this romance: the pursuit of their lovers by ladies disguised as pages in *Twelfth Night*; the kidnapping of the children and their training as warriors in *Cymbeline*; the dagger-incident in the wooing-scene in *King Richard III*; the drowning-scene, and even the phrase 'the adventurous knight', in *Hamlet*; the brook-simile in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

The very number of these suggested borrowings, combined with their distribution, is against them. If they were individually true, their collective value would be sufficient to disprove their individual truth, which is absurd, but not more so than the picture of Shakespeare which Dr. Perott suggests to us. Here the great philosophical dramatist appears little better than a scissors-and-paste artist. Like Don Quixote in his study, Shakespeare is surrounded by Spanish romances of chivalry; some of them are constantly open on his table throughout his literary career, and he dips into them for inspiration when at a loss for a plot, an incident, a phrase, or even an epithet. The most confirmed Hispanophile will hardly welcome this ponderous portrait, and will turn with relief to Mr. Kipling's quick sketch of a human Shakespeare wheedling information from a drunken sailor. Mr. Kipling at least sees his subject in proper focus.

Source-hunting is a necessary evil: some of my own worst moments have been devoted to this degrading sport, with insignificant and, I trust, harmless results. The discovery of literary sources may alter our estimate of an author, and where more than one country is involved, any ascertained facts are of interest for the interrelation of literatures. It can hardly be claimed that our estimate of Shakespeare will be affected by new discoveries as to his sources; his indebtedness—both actual and possible—to his predecessors in one country or another has already

been fully discounted; any new facts will derive their importance mainly from their exalted association. Of late years Shakespeare's possible Spanish sources have been diligently investigated, with but little result; indeed, many of the 'discoveries' dealt with above may seem hardly worthy of serious treatment. Yet they were made by responsible people in reputable publications. Most of them are stated as unquestionable facts, with proofs often depending on very rare—to most people inaccessible—books. Some which are merely put forward as suggestions have been taken over in abstract by other publications and represented as facts. Readers who have not access to the originals quoted, or who have not the arguments before them, are likely to accept the 'discoveries' as proved facts, on the authority of the persons and the periodicals that print them. It was in the interests of such readers, among others, that the present examination of the results of recent investigations was developed.

It would have been gratifying to Spaniards and to Hispanophiles to find that Shakespeare incurred a heavier debt to Spain than we are warranted in acknowledging. It would have been a pleasure to me to enhance, rather than to depreciate, his indebtedness; yet a vain pleasure may be sacrificed without regret for the satisfaction of being on the side of truth. And after all, we have little reason to be dissatisfied with the truth in this matter. The sixteenth century was a period of Italian and French influence in England: Shakespeare himself illustrates this fact. The period of Spanish influence in England, especially in the drama, was still to come. Yet at various points we can bring Shakespeare into relationship, direct or indirect, with Spanish literature. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* owes something to Montemôr's *Diana*, and *The Winter's Tale* to *Amadis de Grecia*. *The Tempest* is at any rate related to Eslava's *Noches de Invierno*, even if Shakespeare knew nothing of the Spanish book. His apparent allusion to *The Mirror of Knighthood* may warrant the suspicion that he read, and perhaps utilized, that romance; and we may at least speculate as to whether he

came under the influence of Cervantes and the *Celestina*. Some may entertain favourably a few more of the suggestions discussed above. But our speculations must be controlled by common sense. We must not consider supposed Spanish originals so closely that we fail to see their relation to general literature. We must not rashly detect a borrowing when we find two writers using a commonplace idea in different (or even in similar) surroundings. We must not all too hastily conclude that a creative artist is incapable of creating. The proverb 'there is nothing new under the sun' is to be interpreted as meaning that the same idea often occurs independently to different people at different times; we must not assume that, because we find it in a great writer's work, this great writer necessarily took it from an earlier (and usually very inferior) writer, simply because we can trace it back so far, and no farther. In short, we must obey a code of rules which can easily be compiled by observing those broken in most of the assertions or suggestions of literary borrowing we have been discussing.

Guided by such rules, we may expect small and indecisive results, where in any case the field is limited. Even as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, Shakespeare was usually artistic enough to cover up his tracks, and while we may frequently suspect, we cannot often bring his borrowings home to him. He himself warns us that it is useless to pry too curiously. Like his own creation Holofernes, he has an 'extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions: these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion'.

We may well be content to praise the Lord for men in whom these gifts are acute, even as Nathaniel did. Certainly those who have gone out of their way to tamper indiscreetly with Shakespeare's intellectual remains seem justly to have fallen under the curse he laid on such as should move his bones.

HENRY BIRKHEAD

AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE OXFORD CHAIR OF POETRY

A PUBLIC LECTURE DELIVERED
IN THE EXAMINATION SCHOOLS
ON OCTOBER 19, 1908

BY

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AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE OXFORD CHAIR OF POETRY

Two hundred years ago to-day, on Tuesday, the 19th of October, 1708, the first Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford delivered his inaugural lecture. We are much overdone nowadays with commemorative celebrations in various multiples of centuries; but the occasion is fitting to say something, among ourselves here and not as part of any public ceremonial, about the founder of the Professorship and the circumstances in which it was founded. The name of Henry Birkhead is almost forgotten; nor, but for this foundation of his, would it have any particular claim on our regard or remembrance. But some duty of piety is owed, by the wholesome tradition of this University, to the memory of its founders and benefactors; and while there is little to say about Birkhead himself, he is in a way the type or average representative of his period; and his period is one of no little importance in the history of English poetry; for it was that of Milton.

In the first place, then, I propose to say what little there is to be said about the founder himself; next to give an account of the foundation of the Professorship of Poetry, and in connexion with that to consider the circumstances in which it was founded as illustrating (which they do in a very interesting way) the attitude of the academic mind towards poetry at the end of the seventeenth

century, and the point in its secular progress which poetry had then reached.

With regard to the life of Henry Birkhead I find little to add to the facts which have been collected by the industry and research of Mr. A. H. Bullen in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The Birkheads, Bircheds, or Birketts, were a Northumbrian family, of whom there are many records in the registers of Durham Cathedral and of different parishes in that county during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of our founder's father nothing seems to be known except that he was, or became, a Londoner, and, according to Aubrey, 'kept the Paul's Head' near St. Paul's Cathedral. Henry Birkhead was born there, in 1617, according to the most probable statement. His father must have been a thriving man, for he gave him the best education which London then provided. This was at Farnaby's famous school in Cripplegate—the school which for a whole generation educated hundreds of eminent Englishmen. It was then at the height of its fame, the first classical school in England, and known throughout Europe. Its size was almost double that of the neighbouring foundation of St. Paul's; three hundred boys attended it, of whom a large proportion were of high birth and many became distinguished in after life. Farnaby himself was reckoned one of the foremost scholars of his age.

From school, Birkhead proceeded to Trinity College, Oxford, where he was admitted a commoner in 1633—at an age of sixteen according to Aubrey's chronology, of twenty, if Anthony Wood is right in dating his birth in 1613—and was elected a scholar in 1635. The next that we hear of him is interesting; it gives evidence that he was a scholar of fine parts, and perhaps also that the accusation made against him in one of the few

notices that there are of him after his death, of weakness and conceitedness, may have had some foundation. Under Jesuit influence, then working strongly if secretly in Oxford, he joined the Church of Rome, and left Oxford to enter as a student at the great English Jesuit College at St. Omer. As often happened in that age of fluctuating religious opinions, his conversion to Catholicism was brief. Within a year or two he rejoined the Church of England ; and on the recommendation of Archbishop Laud, the Visitor of the College, was elected in 1638 a Fellow of All Souls. He was an Anglican and Royalist, but accepted things as they came, and submitted quietly to the Cromwellian Commissioners. While at All Souls he sustained his reputation as a scholar and man of letters, and also studied law and medicine. He associated on friendly terms with other Oxford scholars of both parties ; for one of his friends, and joint author with him of a volume of Latin poems which ran into a second edition during the Commonwealth, was Henry Stubbe, a violent opponent of authority in Church and State, who was expelled from Christ Church and from his keepership of the Bodleian Library for scandalous attacks on the clergy, but had the reputation of being 'the best Latinist and Grecian in Oxford'. Birkhead himself remained at All Souls for nineteen years. In 1657 he resigned his fellowship and went to live in London, where he had chambers in the Temple. At the Restoration he became Registrar of the Diocese of Norwich, a post which he continued to fill for the next twenty years. Of his later life we know nothing : he lived, says Wood, in a retired and scholastical condition. Two volumes of Latin poems, and a few contributions to miscellanies of English and Latin verse, all included within the period of his residence at All Souls, are the sum total of his published works. A MS. play,

written by him, and entitled *The Female Rebellion*, is among the collections in the Bodleian. Mr. Bullen, who is probably the only person alive who has read it, reports that it has little or no merit : I have not had an opportunity of verifying this judgement, but it may no doubt be accepted as right.

He died at his house in Westminster at a very advanced age in 1696, and was buried in St. Margaret's Church, as I find from the parish records, on the 30th September of that year. It was a year of capital importance in English history, the year of the renovation of the currency and the restoration of public credit which opened for England, after a century of distress and confusion, that long era of commercial prosperity under which the Empire was created.

The will under which this Chair was founded had been made by him three years before his death. It is a document of much human interest ; and as it is brief, and has never been published, I make no apology for quoting it in full, omitting only the parts of it which are common form.

'I give and bequeath unto Mrs Margaret Jones my niece because I think she is well provided for five shillings Item I give and bequeath to her brother John Donaldson if he be alive one shilling Item I give and bequeath to Stephen Donaldson the younger brother of the said John Donaldson if he be alive one shilling Item I give and bequeath to Jane Stevenson whom I have formerly called and written to as my wife to save her credit in the world though I was never married to her nor betrothed to her or did she ever so much as desire me to marry her or be betrothed to her She is of Monkwearmouth in the County of Durham I write this in the presence of God who knowes she has been extream false and many wayes

exceeding injurious to me And therefore I bequeath to her but one shilling Item I give and bequeath to Mrs Mary Knight alʒ Geery my sister five shillings

'Item I give and bequeath to Henry Guy of Westminster Esq (The sum is left blank in the original document.)

'I doe hereby nullify and revoke all wills formerly by me in any wise made particularly one last Will and Testament made by me to my best remembrance in the yeare of our Lord 1688 and in the moneth of December I constitute and appoint hereby the forenamed Mary Knight and forenamed Henry Guy executrix and executor of this my last will and testament, to whom I bequeath and give all my lands tenements and hereditaments whatsoever with their appurtanences scituate in the parish of Sutton or thereabouts near Abbington in Barkshire and my lease of lands scituate in the parish of Monkwearmouth in the county of Durham with its appurtanences held by me of the Reverend Dean and Chapter of Durham with all the rest of my goods and chattells of what kind soever In trust to maintain as far as it can for ever a Publick Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford'

There is something pitiable, and almost tragic, in the hot spurt of anger that breaks here from the lonely old man of eighty. From the specific allusion to the previous will of five years before, the natural inference is that the miserable story dated back only to then, and was the case of an old scholar and recluse fallen into senility and become the prey of a woman who looked forward to inheriting his property, but played her game badly.

The Henry Guy named as co-executor with his sister, and described in the letters of administration as *armiger*, was no doubt the politician of that name, a member of

Christ Church and of the Inner Temple, and Member of Parliament for Hedon in Yorkshire. He was Secretary to the Treasury when the will was made, and probably a neighbour of Birkhead's in Westminster. It is not surprising, in view of the terms of the will, that both he and Mrs. Knight declined to undertake the executorship. Mrs. Knight very probably regarded the legacy of five shillings as little short of a direct insult. Guy, a short time before Birkhead's death, had been removed from his post at the Treasury and committed to Newgate for accepting bribes ; he was presumably in no state of mind to undertake an onerous and unremunerative duty, and is not known to have felt the least interest in poetry. Letters of administration were consequently granted in the ensuing December to the Syndic General of the University of Oxford.

The delays of legal procedure were in any case then great ; Jane Stevenson had very possibly made some such havoc in the property as Becky Sharp did later with that of Joseph Sedley, and there appears in particular to have been some long negotiation with the Dean and Chapter in regard to the Durham property. In the inaugural lecture of the first professor they are spoken of as themselves benefactors to the University in the matter, and almost as co-founders. How this exactly was I have not been able to discover. The present Dean, who takes an interest in the matter as it affects both Durham and Oxford, has very kindly had search made for me in the Chapter Records. From the Receiver's books it appears that the rent of certain property which had been paid by Birkhead for 1696–7 was paid by the University for 1697–8, and that in 1698 the University was mulcted in the customary fine on renewal of the lease. But from that point the records become defective :

'Our Chapter clerk in Queen Anne's day,' the Dean writes to me, 'was a neglectful rascal.' It would seem that at some time within the ten years 1698–1708, the Dean and Chapter gave up the rent and made a present to the University of the estate. In any case, the University acquired the estate in some way, for they afterwards sold it. Had this not been done, it is possible either that the endowment of the Chair would be much larger than it is, or, and this is perhaps more likely, that it would have been before now dealt with by statute, whether by the University itself or by a Commission, and its application varied. For, as we shall see presently, Professorships of Poetry do not seem to be in consonance with modern ideas about the organization and staffing of universities.

At all events, it was not until eleven years later that the statute establishing the Chair was framed. It passed Convocation on the 13th July, 1708. The preamble of the statute is in the following terms: I quote from an old translation of the original Latin:

'Seeing that the reading of the old poets contributes not only to give keenness and polish to the natural endowment of young men, but also to the advancement of severer learning whether sacred or human; and also forasmuch as the said Henry Birkhead hath, for the purpose of leaving with posterity a record of the devotion of his mind to literature, founded a poetical lecture in the University of Oxford, to be given for all future times; and hath by his last will bequeathed a yearly income for its support; we decree, &c.'

The provisions of the statute itself, which are in main substance still those in force, are as follows:

1. The Reader is to be either M.A. or B.C.L., or holder of some higher degree in the University.

2. He is to be elected in full Convocation, and at the

end of five years may be elected afresh or some other person appointed, provided that no Reader is to be continued in office beyond ten years, and that no other person of the same House is to succeed him without interval.

3. He is to lecture in the Natural Philosophy School on every first Tuesday in full term (with arrangements for postponement if that Tuesday should be a Saint's Day) at 3 p.m., and also in the Theatre at the Encaenia, ' before the philological exercises commence.'

4. The income of the foundation is to be received and accounted for by the Vice-Chancellor, and a fine of £5 to be deducted from the Reader's salary on each occasion when he neglects to lecture, and applied to the uses of the University.

When the terms of the statute were being debated, a proposal was made, by no less a person than Dean Aldrich, that there should be Encaenia terminally, for the recitation of compositions in prose and verse by young gentlemen, and that on each of these occasions the Professor of Poetry should make a speech. The proposal was negatived ; and I am very glad of it.

This statute remained unaltered till 1784, when the hour of lecturing was altered from 3 to 2 p.m., and the regulation as to the additional lecture at Commemoration omitted. In 1839 the precise regulation as to the day and hour of the terminal lectures was dropped, and it was enacted in more general terms that the professor was to read one solemn lecture every term. The more recent changes by which reappointment for a second term of five years was forbidden, and the inconvenient regulation which did not allow two successive professors to belong to the same college was repealed, are modern and familiar. A ten years' occupancy of the Chair had up till then been

the rule; of the twenty-one professors who successively held the Chair until the power of reappointment was abolished a few years ago, all but four were re-elected for a second term. The new rule, whatever may be thought of it by the occupant of the Chair for the time being, is probably in the interest both of poetry and of the University. That the foundation should have, but for this single change, remained practically the same in its terms for two centuries may be taken, if we like, partly as an indication of the sagacity of its founders when they drew the original statute, partly as an instance of the innate conservatism of Oxford, and of her far from deplorable tendency rather to make the best of existing institutions than to cast them into the melting-pot.

Of the particular aims which Birkhead had in view in his foundation we have no evidence. Thomas Smith, of Magdalen, writing at the time of the foundation of the Chair, says that he knew Birkhead, and that the current story after his death was that he had left considerable sums to the Society of Poets: 'of which,' he adds, 'I know no such formal establishment.' His general ideas, however, may probably be taken as substantially represented by the preamble of the statute of 1708. Poetry was then, from the academic point of view, one of the liberal arts. The inaugural lecture of the first Oxford professor laid it down as a sort of axiom that instruction in the art was both possible and desirable: 'artem poeticam institutionem et admittere et mereri.' There were similar Chairs or lectureships in other European Universities. I do not know whether this was at all generally the case, and have come on but few actual instances. In 1705, there is a record of a visit to Oxford, and admission while there 'to the privileges of the Publick Library', of one 'Mr. Bergerus, Professor of

Poetry in the University of Wittemberg'. This must have been J. W. von Berger, one of three brothers who were all professors, each in a different faculty, at that University. The title of his Chair is, however, given in the *Biographie Universelle* not as Poetry, but as Eloquence.

The title is fancifully suggestive. One can hardly help wondering whether the lectures of some predecessor of his were attended by Hamlet, and whether their influence reappears in that able and wayward scholar's tendency to drop into poetry and his keen interest in dramatic criticism. But the University of Wittenberg itself, Chair of Poetry and all, has long since disappeared. Still the most flourishing of the Universities of Protestant Germany till well on in the eighteenth century, it fell into decay during the Napoleonic wars, and was merged in 1816 in that of Halle. The Vereinigte Friedrichs-Universität Halle-Wittenberg has no Chair of Poetry. Indeed, in the possession of such a Chair Oxford stands, as far as I can ascertain, alone. There is no Chair of Poetry, other than ours, in the British Empire. There is none at Athens or Rome, at Bologna or Berlin. There is none in the many Universities, with their multifarious professorships, which have been founded in the United States of America. At the Sorbonne there are Chairs of Latin Poetry and of French Poetry; but that is a different thing. The nearest and the sole approach to a Chair of Poetry like ours is in the University of Budapesth, where there is half a one; at least there is, among the ordinary professorships, one of *Aesthetik und Poetik*. With these exceptions, if they be exceptions, the Oxford Professor of Poetry has no colleague in the two hundred and twenty Universities now catalogued, and spread over the whole civilized or partially civilized world.

Two hundred years ago the foundation of a Readership in Poetry was a sort of symbol of the generally accepted view that the laws of the art had become fixed, and its principles had become a matter, as one might say, of international agreement in the republic of letters. The *Poetics* of J. C. Scaliger had, ever since their publication in 1561, after Scaliger's death, been received throughout Europe as a sort of textbook of the art. The seventeenth century had gone on building on these foundations; and what was expected of a Professor of Poetry, here or elsewhere, was the same sort of work, in comment and consolidation, that was being done in France by the joint labours of the two Daciers. But in England poetry had taken a course of its own; and the immense and splendid production of a century had been followed by a body of poetical criticism which included work of great excellence and value. Sidney's *Apology* and the treatise attributed to Puttenham belong to the Elizabethan age proper. Through the whole century of the transition there was a constant stream of discussion on the principles and practice of the art; Dryden, who died in the last year of the seventeenth century, was the first critic of his age. Soon after this Chair was founded, Addison began in the *Spectator* the series of literary papers, which remained for more than half a century, until the appearance of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, the last word in English poetical criticism. Within the limits which it had then assigned itself, poetry settled down, during that half century and longer, into an art of fixed rule. The new Renaissance of poetry first foreshadowed in the writings of Gray, Percy, and Warton, did not rise in its full splendour until the last years of the eighteenth century. Coleridge, its inaugurator, also opened up the new Renaissance of poetical criticism. But Oxford was

then and for years afterwards still firmly rooted—or, shall we say, fast stuck ?—in the old tradition.

In Oxford itself poetry, and poetical criticism as we should now understand that term, were two hundred years ago at a low ebb. There was no nest of singing-birds here then such as there had been earlier, and was to be again more than once later. Among the Oxford versifiers of Queen Anne's reign no one attained immortality; the thin but delicate piping of Tickell, a poet best remembered now as Addison's devoted pupil and panegyrist, is the only note that remains audible now. He was deputy-professor of Poetry during the third year of the existence of the Chair, when Trapp, according to the easy-going fashion of those days, had gone off to Ireland as chaplain to the Irish Lord Chancellor. Henry Felton of Edmund Hall might perhaps be still remembered as a poet if he had written many things like these two melodious stanzas, 'occasion'd by a Ladies making a copy of Verses:'

> In Antient Greece when Sappho sung
> And touch'd with matchless Art the Lyre,
> Apollo's Hand her Musick strung
> And all Parnassus form'd the Quire.
>
> But sweeter Notes and softer Layes
> From your diviner Numbers spring,
> Such as himself Apollo plays,
> Such as the Heavenly Sisters sing.

The lines have something of the purity and sweetness of an early Blake. But Felton, unlike Crabbe, appears to have said farewell to the Muses when he became domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland. Other Oxford poets of the period can hardly be mentioned but in a spirit of levity. A single typical instance may suffice; the

entry in Hearne's diary in May, 1710, where he notes that 'Mr. Stubbe of Exeter, an ingenious Gentleman, has publish'd a Poem called *The Laurell and the Olive*, inscrib'd to his dear Friend and Acquaintance Mr. Bubb, who is likewise an ingenious Gentleman, and has a Copy of Verses before this Poem in two pages to Mr. Stubbe'. Such were then, and such with allowance for difference of fashion still are, the frail blossoms of the flying terms. But it had not then become the fashion that a young man should stop writing poetry when he put on his Bachelor's gown. Poetry was at least regarded as an art to be practised by grown men, not as an exercise or amusement to be outgrown with boyhood. In such a change of fashion there may be both loss and gain.

Among the English poets of the preceding generation, Cowley still retained his curious pre-eminence, though now he shared it with Dryden. Milton, as a republican and regicide, was an abomination to all orthodox Anglicans; and in Oxford any praise bestowed on him was faint and grudging, while eager credence was given to an absurd legend that he had died a Papist. Pope only became known after the appearance of his *Pastorals* in 1709. The older poets were, however, becoming the subject of critical study. One of the first acts of Atterbury when he became Dean of Christ Church in 1712 was to give his countenance and assistance to Urry in preparing the edition of Chaucer which, with all its faults and imperfections, was the first attempt made at forming a satisfactory text of the poems, and was only superseded by that of Tyrwhitt more than half a century later. Perhaps a fair judgement may be formed of the way in which poetry was generally read and studied in the University by looking at the names mentioned in the published lectures of the first professor. His inaugural lecture makes

no mention of any but Greek and Roman poets ; in the other lectures the English poets named are, except for Spenser and Shakespeare, all those of his own age or that immediately preceding it, of the period, that is, when poetry in this country had been attacking and achieving the task of becoming fully civilized, of throwing off its insular and national character, and joining—one might almost say, merging in—the general international current of European letters. The knowledge of our older poetry, with but few exceptions, did not extend beyond students and antiquarians.

It was the age of poetical translations ; and these were not only translations into English of foreign masterpieces, but translations into Latin of English originals. Fanshawe, half a century earlier, had started the fashion by his translation of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* into Latin verse. Sir Francis Kynaston, about the same time, had made a Latin translation of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida* : it was dedicated, like the second edition of the volume of Milton's Latin poems, to Rouse, the principal librarian of the Bodleian. Henry Bold, of New College, translated the *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse within a few years after its publication. All this work was on the same lines and directed towards the same object, the testing of English poetry by a universally recognized classical standard, and the vindication for it of a certain classical quality and international value.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the Professorship of Poetry was generally thought of at the time as an institution of high importance, or one which might exercise a powerful influence over thought and taste : still less was there any idea that the interpretation of poetry should be in the hands of its chosen exponent nothing short of the interpretation of life. The statutory

lectures of the professor either were rhetorical exercises, or dealt with the laws of poetry regarded as a formal code, and with the art of poetry in a narrowly technical meaning. The extraneous duties which he was expected to undertake were of a trivial kind: to write a prologue to be spoken before the theatrical performance in Oxford of some play by Betterton or Vanbrugh, or a set of complimentary verses on some public occasion. A little while before he was elected to the Chair of Poetry, Trapp had been desired by the Vice-Chancellor to write encomiastical verses upon the new English edition of Spanheim's treatise *De Nummis*, a copy of which had just been presented by the author to the Bodleian. Pegasus had been got well into harness; and it was the Professor of Poetry's function to keep him there, and see to it that the harness fitted. It is clear enough from all the indirect evidence, of which there is abundance, that this was what was meant. It is clear enough too that this was what actually happened, so far as the earlier Professors of Poetry refrained from following the notorious Oxford fashion of totally neglecting their duties. Of one Oxford professor of that time a contemporary notes that 'having got the place by a Corrupt Interest among the Electors' he turned out 'so dull a Reader that after a few Lectures he could get no Hearers, and so makes the Place in a manner a *sine-cure*, as most other Publick Readers do'. The last words are venomous, but seem not to be wholly untrue. But as regards the estimation in which the Chair of Poetry was held at its foundation we have direct and tangible evidence. The first professor was elected without competition; and this was not, we are told, because of any striking or supereminent fitness on his part, but because others 'did not stir for it on account of the smallness of the salary'. The salary was £25, which

would represent, I am told, something like £75, or rather more, perhaps nearly £100, at the present day. Poetry and poetical criticism cannot of course be weighed in terms of money; but in a salaried appointment, the importance of the office generally bears some kind of relation to the amount of the stipend. It is a further fact, which may induce various reflections according as one looks at it, that the first Professor of Poetry received, for the copyright of a volume of the lectures given by him during the first two years of his tenure of the Chair, just twice the sum that Milton received for the copyright of *Paradise Lost*. But poets, with a few remarkable exceptions, have not been good men of business.

Ample materials exist from which, without going deeply into records, one can form a picture in one's mind of the Oxford of two hundred years ago, alike in its material, its social, and its intellectual aspect. The general impression that one receives is of an Oxford not so very unlike the Oxford of the present day. Like the present time, it was an age of building here, in a new manner and on an imposing scale: we owe to it many of the buildings which are now among the most striking and characteristic of those which adorn the city. 'Lord Arundell's Stones,' as they were called, were still lying in the Theatre yard, but the building in which they were housed until a few years ago was in preparation. Peckwater quadrangle was rising in Christ Church; the stately Church of All Saints on the site of an old and ruinous Gothic predecessor in High Street; and, further down, the massive and dignified façade of Queen's, even then the subject of great controversy, and called a 'great staring pile' by those who held by the smaller and richer Jacobean architecture which was then, as it still remains, predominant in Oxford. It was while that last building was in progress

that, one November evening, the Provost—known familiarly in the University as Old Smoothboots—fell into one of the open cellars ' and was like to have broke his Neck '. He was popularly supposed to have been drunk at the time : for hard drinking was then common even among Heads of Houses and other high officials. When one Fletcher, a scholar of University, was expelled for abusing and striking the Proctor, Harris of Wadham, in the open street, ' there are not wanting credible witnesses,' we are told, ' who say that Harris was more in drink himself than Fletcher.' But University was a difficult college to keep in hand. As an illustration of undergraduate life in Queen Anne's time, and its remarkable likeness to that of our own day, the following account of an incident which took place there in 1706 is worth recording. A newly-appointed Bursar of University had entered on his duties full of zeal for reform. ' Amongst these laudable undertakings,' says the chronicler, ' is chiefly to be mention'd the College Garden which having been almost ruinated and quite out of Repair, he order'd to be cover'd with Green Turff, planted with Trees and Flowers, and the Walks to be gravell'd, to the great Beauty of the Place and Satisfaction of the rest of the Fellows : and there was no one of the College appear'd at present displeas'd with it but the Master : which perhaps being known to one Robinson (a commoner of that House, and Nephew to Mr. Smith, lately Senior Fellow and now in London, who it seems was always averse to this Reform) a day or two after it was finish'd with two or three more of the College, got into the Garden in the Night time, pull'd up some of the Ews spoil'd others, and did other Mischief, to the no small Grief of the Doctor and the rest of the Fellows ; it being such a piece of Malice as one would think could not enter into

the thoughts of any person of common Breeding, and indeed seldom or never heard of in the University, but in this College, where they have had some other Instances of the same Nature, and have had some lads noted for this Diabolical Wickedness; and without doubt 'twas from them Mr. Robinson was instructed, he being reckon'd at first a civil modest Youth, and to be very good natur'd. One reason which instigated him I hear is because the Doctor and the rest of the Society had taken care that all the undergraduates and Bachelors should dine and sup in the Hall, or to undergo a penalty for it, which it seems had been neglected before, to the disgrace somewhat of the College, this being a proviso in all College and Hall Statutes, and if kept up redounds much to the Honour of the University.'

Only a little before this, the Master of University, Dr. Charlett, together with the President of Magdalen and the Provost of Queen's, had been dining with the Warden of New College, 'where they staid till 9 of the clock,' says the letter-writer who tells the story, 'but 'tis highly scandalous to say they drunk to excess, the Warden of New College being not in a very good State of health, and neither of the other noted for being hard Drinkers.' When the dinner-party broke up, Dr. Charlett's boy lighted him home with one of the New College silver tankards instead of a lantern; 'which was not perceived till they came home, because'—here our authority seems to be blowing hot and cold—'because the President of Magdalen and Provost of Queen's accompany'd him.' However this may have been, the incident 'made a great Noise in Town'. The boy was turned off, and disappears from history. 'But I am heartily sorry,' the narrator goes on to say, 'any one should hence take occasion to blacken the Doctor's character, who (not-

withstanding some Failings, to which all are subject) is a man of several excellent Qualifications, and if he had Abilities would be one of the Greatest Encouragers of Learning that have appeared of late.'

But it would be an entire mistake to suppose, from incidents like these, that Oxford was a place entirely given over to idleness and good living. It was full of scholars of wide erudition and vast industry. It was eminent in the study of law and medicine, and of the physical sciences as they were then understood, as well as in its own peculiar field of classical scholarship and theology. Research into the history and antiquities of England was pursued zealously and actively. Rent asunder and half crippled as it was by the furious political and theological controversies of the time, it found even in these a stimulus to the study of ecclesiastical and constitutional history. The University Press was continually bringing out treatises and editions which at least showed no lack of labour and of learning. And it was a subject of regret then, as it has so often been in later times, that many of the finest scholars in Oxford contented themselves with amassing knowledge without communicating it, and carried it all to the grave with them when they died.

Yet, when all is said, it is true that Oxford had then entered on the long period of quiescence, almost of stagnation, which lasted until the early years of the nineteenth century, and the reputation of which still clings to it after almost another century of progress, reform, and revolution. But all through that period it bred fine scholars and accomplished critics; it remained a seat of learning which, if often narrow, pedantic, and insular, was solid and unostentatious. It kept within itself the springs of intellectual life, and the potentiality of reform and advance, the power of adapting itself, though slowly

and cumbrously, to new conditions imposed on it by an altered world. It slept, but was not dead; and thus it is that it is still alive now.

What may be said of the University of Oxford generally may also be said of the Chair of Poetry during the eighteenth century. It slept, or at least dozed: its occupants are names now forgotten, with the exception of Warton, and, to some degree, of Spence and Lowth. It clung hard to its academic and conservative traditions. The great renaissance of poetry at the end of the century was long in reaching it, and reached it at last in the dimmed and distorted form that it took when passed through the absorbent and refractive medium of Anglo-Catholicism. Until Arnold, fifty years ago now, gave the Chair a higher importance and spoke from it to a wider audience, it is to other sources that we must go to trace the progress of poetical criticism, whether such criticism be regarded as the technical exposition of an art or as the appreciation of poetry as a living thing and a power over life. The reading of the old poets, named in the original statute as the object towards the promotion of which the Chair was founded, had sunk into a matter of routine, into a branch of scholarship in the narrower meaning of that ambiguous word. But the greater part of all life is routine; and the reading of the old poets, in whatever spirit it be pursued, at all events ensures that they shall be read. They themselves, not what is said about them, must do the rest. Yet what can be said about them is endless, and endlessly interesting. Poetry itself, like all organic functions of life, may be incapable of exact definition. The works of the great poets cannot receive any final and conclusive appreciation; each age, one might almost say each individual mind among their readers, must appreciate them for itself,

and find in them what it brings the power and the will to find. But in the art of poetry, as in other arts, it is possible to distinguish, to disengage, to illuminate, to pass on to others something of the meaning and beauty that otherwise might not reach them. There are a thousand ways of doing this; for art like nature is inexhaustible; and the foundation of this Chair 'for all future times' requires no justification, since for all future times the need of this elucidative and constructive appreciation will remain, and the instinct towards it be part of human nature. The progress of poetical criticism means the progress of the study of poetry; and that follows endlessly the endless progress of poetry itself. So long as there is a University of Oxford, so long is it permissible to look forward to a succession of occupants of this Chair of Poetry, who one after another will set themselves to realize, in the terms of their own time and in the communication of their own experience, the object which, after his manner and in consonance with the ideas of his age, was in the mind of the Founder: who one after another will be commissioned by the University herself to speak in her name of poetry, as a function, interpretation, and pattern of life.

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Oxford and Poetry in 1911

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE
ON JUNE 2, 1911

BY

T. Herbert Warren, M.A., Hon. D.C.L.
PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE
PROFESSOR OF POETRY

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OXFORD AND POETRY IN 1911

Allora è buono ragionare lo bene quando ello è ascoltato.
DANTE, *Convivio*, iv. 27.

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,

To be given the right, and therefore the duty, to speak in this place, and from this Chair; to speak for Oxford and on the high theme of Poetry, is indeed to be accorded a position which might well overweight even the most competent and confident.

Only to aspire to be Professor of Poetry is, as an old friend said to me a short time ago, an honour.

Oxford has given me many honours. Some here may remember the 'smooth-tongued scholar' in Marlowe, who says

> my gentry
> I fetch from Oxford, not from heraldry.

Without adopting these words in their literal sense, I would say assuredly that Oxford has given me all the best honours I have, and those I would most care to have.

To strive to serve her is my privilege. May her own inspiration aid me and the traditions of this Chair! The traditions of this Chair. What are they? It has many, some old, some new.

There is one, a lost tradition, which I have been asked to revive, and to address you in Latin, to shroud, shall I say? my deficiencies in the 'decent obscurity of a learned language'.

And for certain reasons I might feel tempted to revive

it. There are some things which can be said so much more neatly and easily, without fulsomeness or flattery, in Latin than in English. But I doubt if to-day the suggestion is a practical one. Whatever may have been the feeling in Keble's own time, I think it has been admitted since that the fact of his lectures being in Latin has prevented their finding that vogue which they deserved, or producing that effect which they might well have produced.[1] Keble himself, in criticizing Copleston's lectures, condemned the practice and in strong terms. 'A dead language,' he said, 'is almost a gag to the tongue in delivering ideas at once so abstract and so delicately distinguished.' He afterwards returned to Latin himself on the ground that it would make him more careful in pronouncing judgement. I do not think, after reading his lectures, that he of all men needed that added terror, and I hope I may not.

Another tradition of the Chair I know not if I have broken. I should like in some small measure to have done so, and you will sympathize when I tell you what it is. I will give it you in the words of a poetess to a poet, of Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning. In one of those delightful early letters, she writes under the date of January, 1848. 'You of the "Crown" and of the "Lyre" to seek influence from the "Chair of Cassiopeia"! I hope she will forgive me for using her name thus. I might as well have compared her (as a Chair I suppose) to a Professorship of Poetry in the University of Oxford according to the last election. You know the qualification there is *not to be a poet*.'

But to come to traditions of the Chair more recent and more living. I think naturally first, as you will be

[1] See p. 36.

thinking, of him who filled it last. I take to-day 'this laurel',—the phrase is now so trite we hardly give due credit to the admirable poet who coined it for us some sixty years ago,—from the brow of one who uttered not only 'nothing base', but nothing that had not, to my mind at any rate, in his utterance of it, an indescribable grace. *Ipsa mollities*, a certain 'Dorique delicacy', such as the scholarly old diplomat and Provost of Eton who has recently been made to live again for us so fully, Sir Henry Wotton, found in the youthful Milton—these phrases seem to me to describe more aptly than any others the utterance of Professor Mackail. His criticism of poetry was in itself a kind of poetry.

Nor can I forget, who could forget? the recent tenure of another, a friend from my undergraduate time, and of the same Society, Professor Bradley, who in his five years surely made an enduring mark, who reconciled that ancient, ever recurrent, but ever reconcilable feud of two great forces of the soul and departments of the mind, and showed us how philosophy can handle poetry.

I think, too, as my mind turns backward, of the author of that delightful 'play of the youthful spirit', the 'Paradise of Birds', who in later years, amid the routine of office conscientiously discharged, accomplished that vast task which Pope projected, with which Gray dallied, which Warton left half told, and has given us a definitive *History of English Poetry*.

The Editor of that *Golden Treasury* which was so much for my generation I knew and have heard, and I have heard too the serious and gravely generous author of the 'Bush aboon Traquair'.

The author, gallant and urbane, of the 'Private of the

Buffs' I never heard, but some here have doubtless done so.

And some few have even greater memories. When we think of this Chair and its tradition in the last century, two names stand out before all others, those of Matthew Arnold and of Keble. To the superficial observer they seem to stand out in sharp contrast.

They seem as far apart as the grave and the gay, the sacred and the secular, the saint and the Voltairian. In truth Arnold was no mere Voltairian. Keble again was no stiff or bigoted divine, no believer 'because it was impossible'.

It is not sufficiently remembered that Keble was the old college friend of Dr. Arnold and that he was Matthew Arnold's own godfather. It was not only Clough of whom it could be said—

> The voice that from St. Mary's thrilled the hour,
> He could not choose but let it in though loth.

Matthew Arnold, as an undergraduate, fell like Stanley, like Froude and Pattison and Jowett, like Coleridge and Temple,—who indeed of that time did not fall?—under the influence of the Tractarians. Many here will remember Arnold's moving description of Newman at St. Mary's, given in the Lecture on Emerson delivered in America, beginning, 'Forty years ago when I was an undergraduate at Oxford voices were in the air then which haunt my memory still. Happy the man who in that susceptible season of youth hears such voices! They are a possession to him for ever.'

And the debt was not only spiritual or moral, it was aesthetic also. They had as a common possession a deep love and reverence for Wordsworth, and it is worth while to compare Keble's studied yet happy dedication of his Lectures, with Arnold's Memorial Verses on

Wordsworth. Attention has often been called to the somewhat surprising title prefixed by Keble to these same Lectures, *De Poeticae Vi Medica.* Is it fanciful to suggest that Arnold's well-known expression about Wordsworth's '*healing* power' is borrowed from this heading?

But I have said enough and more than enough for the present moment on these two great names. They are not the only great names of the last century. Keble was preceded by a name not quite so memorable in the history of the Church or of sacred poetry, but still memorable in regard to these interests, and in relation to Church History and sacred scholarship certainly of first-rate eminence, that of Dean Milman.

And there is yet one more name belonging to the century which ought not to be forgotten, that with which it opens. Two of the three I have mentioned are Oriel names. So pre-eminently is this other name, that of Edward Copleston. There are few to which Oriel or Oxford owes more.

The Chair has been in existence for just two hundred years, and its history falls exactly within the bounds of two delimited centuries, the eighteenth and the nineteenth. I have mentioned, omitting living persons, four names of special note in the nineteenth century. Oddly enough the eighteenth presents exactly the same number, those of the first Professor, Joseph Trapp, of Joseph Spence, of Robert Lowth, and Thomas Warton.

Trapp was of Wadham. There is another debt to that most poetical College, which has, I think, never been properly recognized or put on record. The Chair owes its first tradition to one Wadham man, it owes its very existence to-day to another, a recent Head of that House, Mr. G. E. Thorley.

The third Professor was of New College, Joseph Spence. He is certainly memorable. His *Literary Anecdotes* are still agreeable and suggestive reading, and form also a valuable repertory of literary history.

His *Polymetis*, in the fine edition to be found in College Libraries, is a noble book. It had a deserved and far-reaching influence. One special debt we owe it. It was from an abbreviated school edition of Spence's *Polymetis* that Keats derived some of his early inspiration. We think too little, in these days of exact and exhaustive scholarship and archaeology, of those delightful, traditional, gossiping literary works, literary rather than scientific, of Lemprière, Tooke, and Spence. Without Spence we might never have had the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

Of Lowth there is also much to be said. He was a man of mark and character both in letters and affairs. I may be pardoned for quoting at least one testimony. Every one knows the scathing criticism, couched in his inimitable style, which was passed by the great historian of my Society upon his University and his College. The two or three exceptions are not always noted.

In the well-known passage in which he advocates the value of public lectures, the historian himself concludes, 'I observe with pleasure that in the University of Oxford, Dr. Lowth with equal eloquence and erudition has executed this task in his incomparable Praelections on the Poetry of the Hebrews.'

Thomas Warton certainly calls for a lecture to himself, and it may perhaps peculiarly be due from one who is like him a resident. His burly features still look down on us in the Hall of Trinity and suggest his love of beer

and bargees, mingled with his pioneer love of black-letter poets.

But it is not generally known that more than once, a greater than all these came within measurable distance of being Professor.

In 1867 Robert Browning was given the M.A. degree with the idea, in some quarters at any rate, that he might succeed Matthew Arnold as Professor. Arnold's own comment on the matter is to be found in his *Letters* (vol. i, p. 350).

'You will have been interested,' he writes, 'by the project of putting Browning up for the Chair of Poetry; but I think Convocation will object to granting the degree just before the election, for the express purpose of eluding the statute. If Browning is enabled to stand I shall certainly vote for him; but I think Doyle will get in.' The degree was carried, as we have seen, but whether for this reason or for any other the project of the Professorship was dropped, and Oxford and England lost a great opportunity.

It is on record, on the authority of Mr. Edmund Gosse, that Browning said, that had he been elected Professor, his first lecture would have been on Thomas Lovell Beddoes, 'a forgotten Oxford poet.' Beddoes had as it happened already been noticed from this Chair, though not, it is true, very favourably. Writing from Pembroke in 1825 to his friend Kelsall, he says, 'Mr. Milman, our Poetry Professor, has made me quite unfashionable here by denouncing me as one of a villainous School.' I, too, might be tempted to lecture on Beddoes, for he is a Bristol, as well as an Oxford poet. But his story, if not so sad as the better known story of Chatterton, is a sad one, and the study of it would savour somewhat of morbid pathology, however much Browning's

animating vigour might have given it a new health, and would certainly have touched it sanely.

Ten years after Browning's possible candidature, another and quite a different possibility arose. In 1877 overtures were made from Oxford to William Morris to stand. His reply, which is given at length in Mr. Mackail's Biography, is illuminating to all who are interested in poetry. It is very like the well-known letter in which Gray gave his reasons for declining the office of Poet Laureate. Morris thought, he said, that the practice of any art rather narrowed the artist in regard to the theory of it. He doubted whether the Chair was more than an ornamental one, and whether the Professor of a wholly incommunicable art was not rather in a false position. 'Nevertheless,' he concludes, 'I would like to see a good man filling it, and if the critics will forgive me, somebody who is not only a critic.' The letter, like Gray's, was a little hard on persons less gifted than himself.

Is the Chair more than an ornamental one? Is the art wholly incommunicable? What is the relation of a University to poetry? Many Universities, all in a sense, but some in a special sense, would seem to have much about them that may be called poetical. It is a commonplace that Oxford is herself poetical.

So are other Universities, Cambridge, St. Andrews, Heidelberg. They are poetical in their history, their buildings, their amenities, their associations, their free and inspiring life.

And yet the *milieu* of a University is not, in the general sense, the *milieu* of poetry.

It is the business of Oxford to criticize, not to create; to prepare, not to practise. It is with few exceptions by going out from her, not by lingering within her walls,

that her sons achieve greatness in the field of letters as well as in the field of affairs.

It is a hard saying for a resident, but I would say this to any son of Oxford. If you want before all to be a poet, if that is your first object, don't stay in Oxford.

Why not? you will reply.

> *Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,*
> *Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt.*

Surely Oxford is *die Stille.* Yes, but in Poetry talent is only half the battle, character is needed not less.

> Ah, two desires toss about
> The poet's restless blood,
> One drives him to the world without
> And one to solitude.

I hasten to add that there have been exceptions, and that they are becoming every day more common because the Universities are every day becoming so much more open and various. I would say also that this counsel is not for those whose natural home is Oxford. For them it is like any other home, except that it is unlike any other and better than most.

But the academic life does not suit very well with the writing of poetry or indeed of original literature.

It is true that the author of the *Cloister and the Hearth* and of *Peg Woffington* had been a Fellow at my College when I first joined it for about forty years, and remained so for some ten more. But he preferred the London hearth to the Oxford cloister, and his life was more of the town than the College.

Keble, again, wrote the poems which form the *Christian Year* while he was a young resident Fellow and Tutor, but at the time when his poetic powers were quickest he liked Oxford least. 'I begin to be clear,' he

wrote when he was seven-and-twenty, 'that I am out of my element here,' and again a little later, 'I have made up my mind to leave Oxford, I get fonder and fonder of the country and of poetry and of such things every year of my life.' Shortly after, at the age of thirty, he left.

Dodgson and Pater, again, have been partial exceptions, and there are some living exceptions to-day whom I could name.

The great exception, the great example is Gray. What does Gray himself say about the academic life and the great world?

In a letter to Thomas Wharton, he writes as follows:—

> 'Dear Doctor,—You may well wonder at my long taciturnity. I wonder too, and know not what cause to assign, for it is certain I think of you daily. I believe it is owing to the nothingness of my history, for except six weeks that I passed in town toward the end of spring and a little jaunt to Epsom and Box Hill, I have been here time out of mind in a place where no events grow, though we preserve those of former days by way of *Hortus Siccus* in our libraries. My slumbers were disturbed the other day by an unexpected visit from Mr. Walpole who dined with me, seemed mighty happy for the time he stayed and said he would like to live here: but hurried home in the evening to his new gallery which is all Gothicism and gold, and crimson and looking-glass. He has purchased at an auction in Suffolk ebony chairs and moveables enough to load a waggon.'

Yet Gray, from those College rooms which we may still see at Pembroke, indited the most popular poem in the language.

Gray, it has always seemed to me, would have been an ideal Professor of Poetry. For though, like all critics, he makes his mistakes, he is one of the best critics of Poetry, and equally strong in learning and in taste.

The functions of a University are just these, to preserve in its *Hortus Siccus* those events of former days, and to grow in its Botanical Garden the typical plants of the world: to compare their blossoming and their fruitage, to dissect their anatomy, to analyse them, to learn their law, to know the best that has been thought and written in all ages and places, to view things *sub specie aeternitatis*, to provide a real standard.

It is this power that our study of the ancient classics has given us in the past and that the modern classics added to the ancient must still further give us, with a larger induction, in the future.

This presentment of the classics fortunately coincides with the special duties of the Professor. For what are they? When I was elected Professor I naturally read the statute relating to the Chair. I found to my pleasure that the Professorship was established for two reasons, firstly because the reading of the 'old poets' conduces to 'sharpening and making ready and nimble the wits of the young', secondly because this same reading conduces 'to addition being made to more serious literature, whether sacred or profane'.

My duties are then to lecture on the 'old poets' with this twofold end in view. As to the sharpening of the undergraduates' wits I am not sure that that is what they most want. I remember how sharp they were in my day. Still I gladly recognize that part of my duty is to speak to the young. It is they after all who care most about poetry, though they generally have their own opinions pretty well made up—at any rate for the next few months.

But here I find a difficulty which apparently my predecessors did not in the early days. Who are to-day the old poets? Down to Arnold's time my predecessors

seem to have confined themselves, though with increasing liberty of allusion and digression, to the Greek and Latin Classics. Keble, however, allowed himself considerable latitude, and Arnold of course set an example of absolute freedom, not only as regards period but as regards subject. He tells us ingenuously in one of his letters that he threw in the famous lectures on translating Homer because he was supposed, and indeed I think we may say with some reason, not to have lectured enough on poetry.

It was natural that the early Professors should be thus limited. They were so by the custom of the University. They were so by natural causes. Two hundred years ago when Professor Trapp began to lecture, who were the old poets in England and in France? We can best answer that by asking who were the new poets? In 1711, the year in which Trapp began, Louis XIV was still reigning in France and Queen Anne in England.

The recent poets in France were Corneille and Molière, Lafontaine, Racine, and Boileau. In England, Milton and Dryden were hardly old, Pope and Addison were still living and at work.

As for modern German poetry it simply did not exist.

A hundred years later these had become really old writers. Who in turn were the recent and the new? Voltaire and Rousseau had been dead just a generation, but they were still recent. Madame de Stael and Chateaubriand were in middle age. Béranger was thirty-one. Lamartine had just come of age. Hugo was a boy of nine. Schiller had died at the age of forty-two in 1805, but Goethe was still active. Burns was still recent, Scott as a lad had seen him, Scott who was now just between his poems and his novels. The *Lyrical Ballads* had been published some fifteen years, and followed up

by the *Poems* with their famous Prefaces. Byron had come of age, had published *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and then dashed off on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Keats was a surgeon's apprentice among his gallipots, but reading Spenser and translating the *Aeneid*. Shelley had just come up to University College and was just going to get himself sent down again, after two terms' residence. Landor had been sent down from Trinity for an explosion of a different kind a few years before. Tennyson and Mrs. Browning were babes in arms, and Robert Browning was not yet born.

Now these in their turn, are 'souls of poets dead and gone'.

To-day another hundred years have passed by. The Victorian Age itself is now classic, or is rapidly becoming so. It will soon be as classic as the age of Queen Anne. Two years ago, in two successive months, its last representatives vanished from this scene, Swinburne in April, Meredith in May, of 1909. They seemed to pass at once, as the poet says, *sideris in numerum*, and to be added to the great glittering constellation of the Victorian Era. We are beginning then to be in a position to deal with the Victorian Age as a whole, and I think we may do so with some advantage. We stand now sufficiently far off to treat it to some extent historically, yet near enough to be aided by living tradition, and to be saved by this tradition from many of those mistakes to which the hypotheses of a later age, after the facts have been forgotten, must always be liable.

But the situation has changed for the Professor of Poetry in Oxford in two hundred years in another and not less important way.

Two hundred years ago, even one hundred years ago, there was very little public lecturing in Oxford on the

poets. Gibbon in his later life made it a complaint that the Professors did not lecture either at Oxford or at Cambridge. 'The silence,' he says, 'of the Oxford Professors, which deprives the youth of public instruction, is imperfectly supplied by the Tutors as they are styled, of the several Colleges.'

But, for the most part, there were very few Professors to lecture, even if they had all discharged their duty in this regard.

To-day the field of English, both in literature and in language, is covered by a brilliant band of Professors, Readers, and Lecturers. The *Times*, in a leading article on the day of the election to this Chair, said, and justly, that my friend Professor Raleigh has written books which are just such as any Professor of Poetry might have written—if he could.

But, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, it is not only the Professor of English Literature who divides the field with and raises the standard against the unfortunate Professor of Poetry of to-day. The Professor of Greek does just the same. So again does the Professor of Latin and the Professor of German, and the Lecturers in French and Italian and Spanish. All these gentlemen are so many Professors of Poetry. They are so partly by their own gifts, and partly also by the nature of their office. It may happen, it does happen, that some of them are also in no small degree, but in a very marked degree, poets. The same is true of the keen-witted scholar whom the sister University has just annexed to herself, the author of the *Shropshire Lad* who is the Cambridge Professor of Latin. Need I say how largely it is true too of Dr. Verrall? But in point of fact the same has been true for a long time both here and at Cambridge, and true not only of the Professors but of the College

Lecturers. It was true of Sir Richard Jebb. It was eminently true of that vivid younger scholar, critic, and poet, Walter Headlam.

You may see the same phenomenon in Scotland, and no less strikingly in poetic Ireland. You may see it in London University, and in the provincial Universities and Colleges.

Meanwhile, it is all the more important to ask what room there is left for the Professor of Poetry as such. What ought he to be, and to do? It has been said, 'You should obtain for your Professor a practising poet.' Is that in order that he might speak from experience about the technique of his art, shall I say the tricks of his trade? I imagine not. You will find it, I think, difficult to persuade him to do so, and few would be either competent or prepared to follow many lectures of such a kind. But it is very true that the best criticism of the poets has been written by the poets, whether in prose or in verse. The popular saying which finds expression in so many forms, that a critic is a poet, or a creative artist, who has failed, contains at best only half the truth. The good poets have seldom failed as critics. On the contrary, so far as they have touched it, they have signally succeeded. I am inclined to think that the truth is rather that the critics have failed as poets than that the poets have failed as critics. I had already written this when I found that it had been anticipated by the poet Shenstone, who says, 'Every good poet includes a critic: the reverse will not hold.' Some of the greatest critics are indeed not known as poets, but it will, I think, generally be found that they have at one time or another written poetry, from the days of Plato and Aristotle to those of Sainte Beuve, who always declared that when the 'integrating molecule in himself was reached, it would

be found to have a poetical character'. Matthew Arnold, the most original and memorable critic among my predecessors, was also undoubtedly the best and most memorable poet. It was when he tried to pass directly from the critic to the poet that he failed. He wrote *Merope*, his least known and his least successful long poem, just after he became Professor. He said himself, 'She is calculated rather to inaugurate my Professorship with dignity than to move deeply the present race of *humans*.' His best work in poetry was all done before he filled this Chair. The same was true, though less strikingly, of his predecessor, Keble. The reason in both cases, no doubt, is partly natural. The best poetry of both was written by both in their younger and less critical days. Where the poet and the critic coexist, the critic tends, as years go on, to gain upon the poet, partly from the influence of the world outside, partly from internal causes. But these examples, and many others, go to prove that the practice of poetry is the best preparation for the practice of criticism. Of the great critics in our own language, some have been poets hardly less great, like Dryden, Pope, and Coleridge. Others, while not so excellent in verse, like Addison and Johnson, must still rank among the poets.

The same has continued true in our own time. There are no more suggestive and illuminating lights of criticism, even if they are only rare intermittent flashes, than the *obiter dicta* of excellent poets, whether those of Sophocles or Goethe, of Ben Jonson or Gray, of Tennyson or Meredith. One of the best of critics notwithstanding his occasional caprice, his prejudice against persons as dissimilar as Euripides and Byron, 'George Eliot' and Walt Whitman, was Swinburne. You require, it is true, to know how to read, and if necessary

to transpose, his notation. He reminds me of an examiner with whom I once acted, long since dead, whose marking was admirable, if you only understood his scale, and could translate it into normal usage. Swinburne estimated in superlatives or the opposite. His marks were all $\alpha+$ or $\delta-$. Meanwhile the difficulty of filling the Chair in the way suggested is the familiar one. 'First catch your poet.' We have seen how Morris declined; others nearer in time and space have done the same.

How then does poetry stand at the present moment, more particularly in England? Where are we in its evolution? Have we any data either of dead reckoning, or of sounding, or of observation, by which we can determine our bearings? Let us look at the poetic history of the past century. In 1825 Hazlitt, that brilliant and sincere, if too pungent and polemic writer, gave to the world a series of portraits which he collected under the title of *The Spirit of the Age*. About a score of years later the author of *Orion*, Richard Hengist Horne, thought the time had come to issue a *New Spirit of the Age*.[2]

The criticisms are still interesting; yet more interesting is it to see who are the personages criticized. Who were Hazlitt's figures? He begins with Jeremy Bentham and William Godwin, he ends with Lamb and Washington Irving. Between these come Coleridge, Edward Irving, Scott, Byron, Southey, Wordsworth, Sir James Mackintosh, Malthus, Canning, Gifford, Jeffrey, Lord Brougham, Sir Francis Burdett, Lord Eldon, Wilberforce, Cobbett, Campbell, Crabbe, Tom Moore, and Leigh Hunt. It will be remarked that neither Shelley nor Keats finds a place. In the account of Byron it is noted that the news of his death arrived even while the paper on him was being composed. Of

[2] See p. 36.

the figures selected by Hazlitt as typical of the Age of 1825, only two survive in Horne's book as typical of the Age of 1844. These are Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt, 'two laurelled veterans,' 'links between the past and the present' as he describes them. Who are Horne's other figures? It is interesting to recall the names of the men and women who in 1844 appeared to the critic to embody the spirit of the era. The list is a very long one. I will not give it you in full. It may suffice to say that it begins with Charles Dickens (Thackeray significantly does not appear), the Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Thomas Ingoldsby,' and Landor: that it contains Dr. Pusey and Captain Marryatt, Tennyson, Macaulay and his victim Robert Montgomery, Macready, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett, Robert Browning, and Carlyle, and ends with Sir Henry Taylor and the author of *Festus*. There is this difference between the two. Hazlitt in 1825 is pessimist and looks backward. His essay on Coleridge opens with this striking statement: 'The present is an age of talkers and not of doers, and the reason is that the world is growing old. We are so far advanced in the Arts and Sciences, that we live in retrospect and doat on past achievements.'

Was this how the age really appeared to a perspicacious mind in 1825? 'Far advanced in the Arts and Sciences! "Figure it to yourselves," as the French say. Five years before the opening of the first railway, five years off from 1830.'

Horne, on the other hand, is optimist and looks forward. What has intervened? A gigantic stirring and awakening alike spiritual and material. They were, indeed, in 1825, in the small hours, in the dead, weary night before the dawn. When Byron died, Tennyson

and his friends, as you remember, thought the world was at an end. Our world was only just beginning.

The era ran its well-known course. We have another picture of it. A little more than twenty years later again, Matthew Arnold, in a volume styled *New Poems*, included a remarkable and characteristic piece entitled 'Bacchanalia, or The New Age'. May I be allowed to make rather a long quotation from the middle of this poem?

'The epoch ends,' he writes:—

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill—
The famous orators have shone,
The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now—
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow.
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.
. . . . . .
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage—
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen mights—
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,
Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting
In torrents and waves—
Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves—
See on the cumber'd plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about
Comes the new age.

Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules.
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries.

The passage is applicable, that is part of its merit, to any marked and sundering change from an old to a new era. But it seems indubitable that Arnold was thinking of his own era, of the end and break-up of the old political régime, culminating in 1848, of the death of Wordsworth in 1850 (preceded by Coleridge and Southey), in other words of the 'new age' heralded by Horne in 1845. This becomes yet more clear if we read the Memorial verses, headed 'April, 1850', and first published in *Fraser's Magazine* at the time of Wordsworth's death, which took place on April 23 of that year. It is not perhaps easy to say exactly what Arnold held to be the true limits of Wordsworth's 'period', for, like every other critic, he regarded him as having outlived his day. He ranks him, however, with Byron and Goethe as a poet of 'the iron age', 'the iron time', 'Europe's dying hour'.

That had been the time of Wordsworth's real impact. His influence gradually grew with the age which he formed. Horne's prose says again the same as Arnold's poetry: 'After twenty years of public abuse and laughter William Wordsworth is now regarded by the public of the same country as the prophet of his age.'

Arnold's poetic treatment of the New Age, it will be noticed at once, is far more general and wide in its scope than that of Horne's prose volumes. But this is accidental.

In the Preface to his first edition Horne writes, 'Should the design of the projectors be fully carried out the work will comprise the Political Spirit of the Age, in which of course the leading men of all parties will be included, the Scientific Spirit of the Age, the Artistical Spirit of the Age, and the Historical, Biographical, and Critical Spirit of the Age.'

Horne then fully intended to be as all-embracing in his diagnosis and analysis as Arnold is in his suggestion. In point of fact the new age was perhaps most marked in the realm of painting, the most central, notorious, new departure being that of the since famous Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which started in the autumn of the year 1848. The name for it was found by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the summer of that year, after he had read Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters of Keats*. It was the result of the friendship of three young art students, Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt, who had joined forces in this year. Holman Hunt described it to me himself when he was here painting 'May Day on Magdalen Tower'. After a *reconnaissance* in 1849 they made their real venture in 1850 and 1851, when the battle began. They were at once violently attacked by the critics of the old school. Ruskin, himself a new writer, rallied to their side. They may be said to have received their first Oxford influence through this channel. Then began *The Germ*. Its oddly-sounding title had not then the scientific associations which now attach to the word. Six years later first Burne-Jones and then William Morris were introduced in London to the 'P. R. B.', and the next year the 'P. R. B.' itself came to Oxford. Rossetti was brought by Ruskin to aid in the designs of the new Museum, and seeing the new Debating Room of the Union, formed the idea of the decoration of the roof. In 1858

'George Eliot' published *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Fitz-Gerald *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and William Morris *The Defence of Guinevere.* The next year came Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, and Mill's volume on *Liberty.* It may well be said that the new era had now established itself. It culminated in 1870, when Morris finished the *Earthly Paradise*, and Rossetti published his Poems. In the meantime other names of note had added themselves, in particular Swinburne and Christina Rossetti.

This age then again, ran its course in some twenty to five-and-twenty years, and this, the period of a generation, we may take it, is the period of an age of poetry. Many writers live through two, as we saw that Wordsworth did, while Keats and Shelley and Byron lived only through one. Tennyson, and Browning though less in evidence, lived through and wrote in three, for not only were they both in full activity during this period which we have just indicated, from 1830 to 1870, but they continued to write, Browning for twenty, and Tennyson for more than twenty years longer. Tennyson was indeed like Nestor.

> *Τῷ δ' ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων*
> *ἐφθίαθ', οἵ οἱ πρόσθεν ἅμα τράφεν ἠδ' ἐγένοντο*
> *ἐν Πύλῳ ἡγαθέῃ, μετὰ δὲ τριτάτοισιν ἄνασσεν.*

But at last Nestor too went to join Antilochus, and yet a new generation appeared.

We are now nearly twenty years again from Tennyson's death. We may again look out for yet a newer spirit, for the 'newest spirit' of the 'newest age'. Were we to set ourselves once more the task of Horne, who are the men and what are the forces we should have to describe?

They are not wanting, I think, and many of them are

not far to seek. The statesmen, the soldiers, and the jurists, all the men of action ; the divines and the men of science, the novelists, the actors, are all round us. And the poets? It is usual indeed to say that we have no poets, at any rate no great poets, among us. It is true that in all the arts and activities of the soul and mind we have lost in the last twenty or five-and-twenty years great names and great figures, not in poetry alone, but in painting and sculpture, in creative prose literature, in history, in science and philosophy. Only here and there a solitary figure like that of Sir Joseph Hooker or Dr. Alfred Wallace links us to the intellectual past. But neither science nor literature nor even poetry is dead. Despite the absence of conspicuous and household names of poets pure and simple, I would confidently assert that we have still poets among us who have written pieces which have as good a chance of living in the Anthologies of the future as many of the pieces which appear in the Anthologies of the present. There has always been this complaint of the dearth of good new poets. Somewhere about 1880 it must have been that I met Browning for the first time, and I remember the talk turned on this very topic. Browning said, 'Well, anyhow we are not worse off than they were at the beginning of the century,' and he quoted the doggerel Latin lines which I had never heard before, which are attributed to Porson :

> Poetis laetamur tribus
> Pye, Petro Pindar, parvo Pybus,
> Si ulterius ire pergis,
> Adde his Sir James Bland-Burges.

The hundred years which have elapsed since the beginning of the Romantic movement have enormously enlarged the resources of poetry. Its modes have been

many times multiplied both in France and in England. We too have had our Romanticists, our Parnassians, and our Symbolists. Whatever may be thought of Tennyson, Morris, Swinburne, Bridges, or Kipling, as poets, they have, whether in the revival or modification of the old, or in the addition of the new, added signally to the range of English metrification, and to our conception of the possibilities of music and harmony in English verse.

Now for the first time we are beginning systematically to teach our students their own language and literature. France has long done it. Greece always did it. Who shall say what the effect will be on the English literature of the future? Who can say again what may not be the effect of such a vast Thesaurus as will be, when it is completed, the *New English Dictionary*?

Certainly the young English poet of to-day ought to be better equipped than the young poet of the past in technique. And I believe he is. It is, I think, the abundance of models and the diffusion of education which account for the diffusion of technical skill of a very creditable excellence.

But it is asked, Why are there no new great poets? For my part I do not doubt that they too will by and by again arrive. Great men are always scarce, and to be a really great poet you must be a great man. It may indeed be that the present age is not one whose first or second preoccupation is with poetry. Politics, science, business, affairs, activities, the preparation for war, the contests with the elements, exploration, commerce, all these may predominate. But all this only points to the fact that the world is moving and living, if it is not at the moment meditating or singing in an equal degree. That a new age is arriving we all feel, some with

optimism, some with pessimism, some with mingled hope and apprehension. There have been, no doubt, in the past, tracts and periods of literary sterility. The present condition of the United States of America certainly does not seem to favour literary production. But both there and in Germany, where it cannot be doubted that great changes, intellectual as well as material, in the condition of a vast and powerful nation have been, and are, in process, a revolution in this regard may rapidly occur. You young people, who have the whole of the next new age before you, you, I hope, are optimistic, resolute, and prudent, but optimistic; critical I am sure you are, for you would not be young if you were not, but criticism of others' enthusiasms or of past ideals may go with a great deal of enthusiasm and new ideals of one's own. The world surely was never more interesting for young or old, perhaps never more achingly interesting, with an intensity half pleasurable, half painful, than at present. We are reminded of the lines which the young poet wrote in the dawn of the Victorian Era:

> Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
> A motion toiling in the gloom—
> The Spirit of the years to come
> Yearning to mix himself with Life.
>
> A slow develop'd strength awaits
> Completion in a painful school;
> Phantoms of other forms of rule,
> New Majesties of mighty states.
>
> The warders of the growing hour,
> But vague in vapour, hard to mark;
> And round them sea and air are dark
> With great contrivances of Power.

Are we not to-day nearing a new 1830, pregnant with change? We see new nations in either hemisphere

and in every portion of the globe; Canada a nation, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa nations, United Italy, United Germany, solid established historical facts, the Germanic and the Slavonic combinations growing and coming together, Turkey and Egypt feeling after modern efficiency, Japan broad awake, and China awakening, the United States an active and expansive world-power, South America with its immense physical riches one of the great potencies of the commercial world; the constant attrition of privilege, the growth of democracy, confronting this strengthening of nationality; freedom and order everywhere competing, science with its illimitable vistas alike of theory and of application, always at work upon both the moral and material life; these are some of the main factors of the new momentous age. Religion in many forms is certainly not less alive to-day than formerly; indeed, I trust it is more alive than ever. The theatre is vigorous, full of leaders and ideas. The novel, which was thought to be nearing exhaustion of subject thirty years ago, shows at least no sign of extinction.

How poetry will deal with these new themes, how it is beginning even now to deal with them, I may perhaps attempt to discuss in future discourses.

Meanwhile where are the English poets of the next age? Perhaps in Oxford. Perhaps here to-day. And yet, it may also be, not here, even though they belong to Oxford. That they may belong to Oxford I think not unlikely. Oxford, it is true, has not always had her share of the poets of the country. It is certainly strange that while even Cambridge men like Dryden and Wordsworth and FitzGerald have admitted that Oxford is herself full of poetry, and at least not less so than her sister, she has in the past produced far

fewer of the great poets than Cambridge. What the reason of this may be it is not easy to pronounce. Partly it is a matter of accident. I remember well in younger days, when I had more of the spirit of schoolboy rivalry, my amusement and pleasure too when I came on the passage in a letter to Murray in which Byron describes his experiences and feelings when he began his undergraduate career. 'I was wretched', he says, 'at leaving Harrow, to which I had become attached during the last years of my stay there, wretched at going to Cambridge instead of Oxford because there were no rooms vacant at Christ Church.'

The whole letter, which contains the famous passage in which the 'Tutor' advised Byron's friend, to whom his rooms were lent in his absence, not to damage any of the furniture, 'for Lord Byron, Sir, is a man of tumultuous passions,' is exceedingly entertaining. It was then an accident that Byron did not come here, and similar accidents may have determined the choice of others of the long list. But it must be admitted that it is too long to be all due to accident. It is more interesting to inquire whether it is in any way connected with our studies. Mr. Gladstone, in the very interesting personal recollections of Arthur Hallam which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* some thirteen years ago, and which, I think, have still never been republished, enters with characteristic thoroughness into the speculation of what would have been the effect on the intellect of Arthur Hallam if he had been sent, as Mr. Gladstone, like a good Oxonian, clearly indicates he thinks he ought to have been, by his father, to Oxford instead of to Cambridge, and in place of devoting himself or rather failing to devote himself to the studies of Cambridge, had read for the Final 'Greats' School.

Whatever the reason the fact remains that at that time, and for a few years longer, Cambridge was certainly predominantly the University of English Poetry, as Oxford was predominantly the University of English Prose.

In the last fifty years the balance has perhaps considerably shifted. Certainly the University of Matthew Arnold himself, of William Morris and others well known, need not hide its head, and to-day we have not to look very far from Oxford, or to search very deeply amongst living Oxford men, to see that we have still less reason to complain. Who the next generation of Oxford poets will be I will not attempt to pronounce. They will not perhaps be discovered by the Professor of Poetry. The wind of the spirit bloweth whither it listeth and the new princes of Poetry come not usually 'with observation'. They will more probably be discovered by the young for themselves, by their own contemporaries, in some youthful coterie or *camaraderie.*

Such little circles appear from time to time in Oxford. Silently, stealthily they come together, like fairy rings in the night, sometimes only leaving a mysterious mark upon the morning grass, and afterward melting away even as they came; sometimes growing into more lasting strength of flower and fruit. Such was the little coterie of Birmingham schoolboys, who, coming to Oxford in the 'fifties', gathered new friends and forces to themselves, and by and by, as we have seen, merged in the still more famous 'brotherhood' of London which turned the world of art and taste upside down. A more recent example was that later friendship to which my immediate predecessor belonged, which, when the 'seventies' were passing into the 'eighties', sent flying to and fro those 'Waifs and

Strays' of poesy, fresh and fragrant, if immature, like the green, fluttering leaves and seedlets which blow about the quadrangles and strew the College lawns in May-time, or coined those merry epigrams which by and by found their way into the great world. Such, in another spring, a dozen years later, were the four friends who put forth a shy little volume so happily entitled *Primavera*. Twenty years have again gone by and yet another *Primavera* may be due. But I do not count on finding its authors here. They do not invariably attend lectures even on poetry.

> Ite hinc inanes, ite rhetorum ampullae,
> Inflata rore non Achaico turba!
>
> Away, haunt not thou me,
> Thou vain Philosophy!
> Little hast thou bestead,
> Save to perplex the head,
> And leave the spirit dead.

Such has very often been the language of the poetic undergraduate. But even if they are not here I may perhaps offer to them, in their absence, a few words of practical advice. Do not think, any of you, because you have a turn for versification, even a very pretty turn, that you are necessarily poets. The gift for versification is very widely diffused.

It is perhaps hardly less widely diffused than the gift for drawing or music. Few clever men, with a literary turn at any rate, are quite without it. Statesmen, divines, judges, architects, artists, have always had it. Half the great men in letters and affairs of the last generation possessed it. They were not quite poets, though some of them came very near it. The same has always been the case and is doubtless the case to-day. But if you have the gift, cultivate it, at any rate in youth. It is

at least a delightful and also an educative exercise. I think that the art of versification, and even of poetry, might be more taught than it is, as part of a literary and mental training. You will soon find out, life will teach you, whether poetry is your vocation. It is that only for one in a hundred thousand.

Some people seem to think I ought to be prepared to give lessons in poetry. They write and solicit my advice. They ask to be recommended some manual of poetry. They invite me to correct their verses. I am not saying that this instruction could not be given at all. One of the greatest of poets gave it, or something very like it; Dante, who was, as it pleases me to think, a Professor of Poetry at the University of Bologna. A lesser poet of more recent times, de Banville, offered, I believe, to teach poetry in so many lessons. I do not propose to follow his example.

Poetry is not to be regarded as a profession amongst professions. Parents and guardians have always said the same thing about it, and they are right—what Tennyson's grandfather said to Tennyson and Pope's father to Pope, and Cowper to poetry itself, what Ovid's father long before said to Ovid.

Maeonides nullas ipse reliquit opes.

'Even Homer left no fortune,' or as I suppose we ought to put it, to be up to date, the syndicate for promoting the rise of the Greek Epic did not pay its shareholders.

If you merely want fame and fortune for their own sakes, seek them in other lines, but if indeed poetry is your vocation, then walk worthy of it. If the magic gleam does glance on your path, 'follow the gleam!'

Art thou poor yet hast thou golden slumbers,
Oh, sweet content!

Meanwhile is the Oxford of to-day a favourable ground for the production of poetry or poets? The Oxford of sixty years ago, says a living poet, speaking of the time of Burne-Jones and Morris, was singularly unsympathetic. And as regards direct teaching this would seem to have been so.

Oxford herself was perhaps at that time more beautiful than to-day. The whisper of the last enchantments of the 'Middle Age' was less mingled and confused with the whirr of modern science and modern commerce. But on the other hand the ideas of modern science were also wanting. The opportunities of studying both science and art were meagre and scant. Ruskin had not enriched the Galleries with his gifts or with his Drawing School. Morris and Burne-Jones went toward the end of their undergraduate time as a favour to see the Combe Collection of Pre-Raphaelite art at the private house of the owner at the University Press. Now any undergraduate can go and study it for himself, excellently displayed as it is to-day, in the Ashmolean Buildings.

There was then no exhibition of plastic art of any educative kind in Oxford. We remember how much Keats owed to the Elgin Marbles, savagely denounced as their transference to London had been by Byron. The student at Oxford had no equivalent opportunity. To-day he has the whole range of Professor Gardner's Department and of the Ashmolean Collections.

Music, it is true, had never quite died out. Like architecture and with architecture it had maintained its living continuity in Oxford under varying changes of fortune and taste.

But Music in England, especially in the last fifty

years, has made great advance, and is to-day an influence far more present and energetic than it then was.

I am inclined to believe more in these indirect influences than in any direct education of the poet. And yet I am doubtful whether influences more indirect still may not be yet more potent.

The chance-blown seed lighting on the happy corner may produce blooms which 'outredden', and 'outperfume' too, 'all voluptuous garden roses'.

The free intercourse of quick, youthful minds in College and University life, the stimulus of original and enthusiastic teachers—these all, history tells us, have been powerful if not to produce, at least to foster original and creative minds.

I said the world was never more interesting than to-day. Nor I think was there ever a greater call for the intuition of the poet to interpret the new age to itself, and Oxford should surely contribute her share toward this end. What is her inspiration? How did Matthew Arnold fifty years ago, from this place, define her spirit? 'Sweetness and light.'—The harmonizing of poetry and of truth; the search for truth, guided by the splendour of beauty.—If I had to rewrite after fifty years this formulation of the Oxford spirit and say how it lives and appears among us to-day, for that it does live and appear I believe and hope, I would say that the best spirit of Oxford is shown in the combination, in every field, of research with reverence. Oxford has a unique opportunity in her history and her material incarnation, in her old studies supplemented as they are to-day by her new. To her Humanities she has at last added Science, to her Metaphysics the Physics she so much needed, and for which for so long she cared too little. But let her be careful now in

adding the new to keep the old. Let her recognize that in the things of the spirit the human element enters in. You cannot treat men and their actions, either those of to-day or those of yesterday, as if they were only automata responding to a mechanical stimulus. You cannot so interpret history or language, or so work upon human nature. We see the Oxford spirit perhaps best in some of our leading workers in that region where it is needed most, but it is needed in every field of learning, and I think—I would fain think—we see it, and not seldom, in each in turn.

Oxford has been in time past a far-famed home of Theology; she has been a far-famed home of Philosophy; she has been a famed school of the historian, the economist, and the statesman; she is beginning to be a school of Natural Science; let her become more than of yore—I think she is beginning to become that also—a nursery, a training ground, a home, of poets.

For it is just here that that special power can help us, that first and finest of the Fine Arts, that Muse which is, as we know, more philosophical than History, more potent with mankind in general than Philosophy, more penetrating in its eloquence, and in its influence more permanent, than Rhetoric—the Muse, the 'divine' Muse, of Poetry.

NOTES

[1] p. 4. I am glad to think that this drawback is about to be removed. The Oxford Press will before long produce, with the aid of the Warden of Keble, a translation of these Lectures by Mr. E. K. Francis.

[2] p. 19. Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age* has been republished in Bohn's Standard Library. Horne's *New Spirit of the Age* is included in the World's Classics (Henry Frowde. Oxford University Press. Price 1*s*.).

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Robert Bridges

Poet Laureate

Readings from his Poems

A PUBLIC LECTURE
DELIVERED IN THE EXAMINATION SCHOOLS
ON NOVEMBER 8, 1913

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS lecture as here published differs slightly in form from what it was as delivered. On the one hand the text is a little longer, as want of time made it necessary to omit then some passages given in these pages. On the other hand some of the pieces read as illustrations, when the lecture was delivered, are not reproduced, but are given by reference to the pages of the Oxford Book, *The Poetical Works of Robert Bridges,* excluding the Eight Dramas: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1913. The different forms and prices of this edition will be found at the end.

Lines sent with a copy of the 'Shorter Poems'

Take, friend of all that 's good and fair,
This book of daintiest verse,
And let each coy, retirèd air
Its music rare rehearse.

The silver Thames by summer kiss't,
The rustling brakes of spring,
Or autumn woods when gales are whist,
Such songs as these they sing.

Such song in England's flowering day
Made merry England brave,
From honied Chaucer shrewdly gay
To Wither blithely grave.

T. H. W.

READINGS FROM THE POET LAUREATE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

UNDOUBTEDLY the event of the vacation for us in Oxford, the event of the year in the English literary world, was the appointment of our neighbour, the friend of many of us, Mr. Robert Bridges, to be Poet Laureate. 'The friend of many of us.' I ought to tell you at the outstart that I am an old friend, and I speak with the partiality of an old friend. You may discount my opinion, if you will, proportionately. But it is my belief that it is an event and an appointment of no small or brief importance.

I would begin with one word, or rather really two words, of congratulation. I would congratulate Mr. Bridges in your name and in the name of his university, of which he has shown himself not only such a worthy, but such a loyal and affectionate son. And I would congratulate that other son of Oxford, the Prime Minister, and thank him for not having listened to those in Parliament and elsewhere, who would fain have persuaded him to abolish this historic and picturesque office.

The history of the Laureateship is not very well known. To recount it would require a special lecture. I will only say that it is partly the fault of the poets themselves if it is less continuously creditable than it might have been. Some years ago I had the opportunity of hearing Mr. Gladstone's opinion about the office. He said to me that 'the history of the office was curious and seemed

to show that an appointment, to be prosperous, required to combine a number of conditions'. It has had, of course, its ups and downs. Oddly enough, it was vacant just a hundred years ago this summer by the death of the then holder, whose name was Pye, a member of my own college.

Mr. Bridges has, in the Collection of Sonnets entitled 'The Growth of Love', a delightful sonnet in which he notes how by a happy chance so many of the names of the great poets are themselves beautiful and musical, and might seem to have been chosen for their beauty and euphony.

'Thus may I think', he writes,

> the adopting Muses chose
> Their sons by name, knowing none would be heard
> Or writ so oft in all the world as those,—
> Dan Chaucer, mighty Shakespeare, then for third
> The classic Milton, and to us arose
> Shelley with liquid music in the word.

Mr. Pye's name was not poetical, however spelt, and was often made game of. The Laureateship at that time was very down. But why was it down? The fault lay not with the Kings or the Prime Ministers. They had offered it in the previous century to one of the very best poets of the century, to Gray. Gray refused it, in a clever and characteristic letter. But in this very letter he said he hoped some one might be found to restore its credit, and having refused, he shortly after wrote the Installation Ode, a pre-eminently occasional, laudatory, laureate piece containing some splendid and some most beautiful verses, but the concluding lines of which are absolutely in the vein which he and others disparaged.

> The star of Brunswick smiles serene
> And gilds the horrors of the deep.

In the year 1813 the laurel was offered—again to one of the best poets of the day—to Sir Walter Scott. One of the reasons why Scott declined it was that Gray had done so. It was then given to Southey, then to Wordsworth, and then to Tennyson. Tennyson received it as we all know,

> Greener from the brows
> Of him who uttered nothing base.

He left it not only greener, but more glorious still, fragrant and fertile with the flower and fruit of some forty years. The poet's laurel, be it remembered, is the 'odorous bay'.[1]

When the Exhibition of 1862 was opened and Tennyson's Ode was sung, one of the newspapers reported that the poet-laureate was present 'clothed in his green *baize*'.

Tennyson died just one-and-twenty years ago. A child born on the day of his death would, this autumn, exactly have reached his majority. Born four or five years earlier, so that he could just remember Tennyson, he would be to-day five- or six-and-twenty. It is the period of a generation. During all that time the laurel has certainly been, to put it gently, somewhat in the shade. But if it is not cut down it is an evergreen tree, and once more it is shining in the sun.

Habemus poetam laureatum! We have a laureate, in the true English line of English poetry, of Chaucer and Spenser, of Milton and Gray, of Wordsworth and Tennyson.

But I am not going to praise, or to appraise, my old friend. I am not going to attempt any critical study of his work or his works. I have done so before now, and I may perhaps be allowed to mention to you the name of a little volume in which some three-and-twenty years ago I ventured to introduce and commend him to

readers of poetry. It was a volume in Mr. A. H. Miles's series of the 'Poets and the Poetry of the Century', and it was entitled *Robert Bridges and Contemporary Poets*.[2]

I was asked to do this by Mr. Miles, and Mr. Bridges himself aided me in the task by giving me a few autobiographical notes, which I still possess, and of which I made use.

Among the 'contemporary poets' whom it contained were Frederic W. H. Myers, Edward Dowden, Ernest Myers, Gerard Hopkins (with an introduction from Mr. Bridges' own pen), Arthur O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Lang, Edmund Gosse, W. E. Henley, H. D. Rawnsley, R. L. Stevenson, Alice Meynell, A. Mary F. Robinson, William Watson, and Rudyard Kipling.

In 1906, fifteen years later, it was revised and reissued under the title *Bridges to Kipling*. The ladies were removed to another volume and some new poets were added, among them Henry Newbolt and Laurence Binyon.

What, with your kind concurrence, I should desire to do to-day is, to ask you to judge, and to help you to judge, for yourselves, of this fine poet, for such he is, and his production, giving such amount of introduction and explanation as may enable you to understand his poems better.

For it is the truth that his poems have not been, and still are not, as well known as they ought to be. I find, for instance, that comparatively few know that he has already written a beautiful piece in what might be considered a peculiarly laureate vein. It was not written to command and is of course all the better for that. It was written, however, for Queen Victoria's 'Diamond Jubilee'. It is headed '*Regina Cara*, Jubilee-Song, for

Music, 1897'. It has a characteristic Latin 'Envoy'. It will be found on p. 364 of the Oxford edition.

It is a commonplace to say that Mr. Bridges is not a 'popular' poet. In a sense that is true. He has never sought to be popular. He does not live in the street. His poetry is not known to the 'man in the street', whether on the pavement or on the top of the tram. May I say that the cult of him is not one which falls under the formula—

Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab 'omnibus'?

He left the street long ago, for the very reason that he did not wish for this sort of worship.

> And country life I praise,
> And lead, because I find
> The philosophic mind
> Can take no middle ways;
> She will not leave her love
> To mix with men, her art
> Is all to strive above
> The crowd, or stand apart.

So he wrote in the 'Invitation to the Country' (Oxford edition, p. 253).

But his critics sometimes go further than this and say that he has deliberately shunned popularity, that he has only brought out his poems in the rare editions of a private press or in separate and isolated pamphlets, which, like the Sibyl's leaves, he has allowed the winds of chance to scatter, and has never gathered together again. I do not think that is quite fair.

We have all heard of the timid gentlewoman who had seen better days and was reduced to selling muffins, and who cried her wares in ever so soft a voice, saying, 'Muffins! Muffins! I hope nobody will hear me!' Well, I don't think Mr. Bridges was ever quite like that, but he has

sometimes reminded me of his own 'flame-throated robin' of whom he writes:

> Thus sang he; then from his spray
> He saw me listening and flew away.

But of this and of his poems I want you to judge for yourselves. If we could understand them I think we should find that of him, as of other poets, his poems themselves were the best biography. But that you may understand them, I will attempt a brief outline of his career, giving it when I can in his own words.

He was born, then, at Walmer, in 1844. Some of you may remember the lines which stood in the earliest versions of Tennyson's Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington:

> Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
> He died on Walmer's lonely shore.

Tennyson was nearly six when Waterloo was fought. He was forty-three when the great Duke died, in 1852. Mr. Bridges, in his turn, was then a boy of eight.

There is a charming autobiographical poem of his styled 'The Summer House on the Mound', which describes how he used to watch, through a telescope from his father's garden, the ships in the Channel, and how, in particular in 1854, he saw the English Fleet under Napier making its way to the Baltic, and among the vessels 'the Admiral ship The Duke of Wellington'.

Tennyson, you may remember, heard the booming of the guns at Portsmouth as he wrote 'Maud', in the January of 1854, and he watched the 'ships of battle' 'slowly creeping' under the cliffs at Freshwater. I remember Mr. Bridges telling me that the 'Letter to F. D. Maurice' was a poem he much liked.

Let me now read you Mr. Bridges' own description. (Oxford edition, pp. 334–5.)

One noon in March upon that anchoring ground
Came Napier's fleet unto the Baltic bound :
Cloudless the sky and calm and blue the sea,
As round Saint Margaret's cliff mysteriously,
Those murderous queens walking in Sabbath sleep
Glided in line upon the windless deep :
For in those days was first seen low and black
Beside the full-rigg'd mast the strange smoke-stack,
And neath their stern revolv'd the twisted fan.
Many I knew as soon as I might scan,
The heavy *Royal George*, the *Acre* bright,
The *Hogue* and *Ajax*, and could name aright
Others that I remember now no more ;
But chief, her blue flag flying at the fore,
With fighting guns a hundred thirty and one,
The Admiral ship *The Duke of Wellington*,
Whereon sail'd George, who in her gig had flown
The silken ensign by our sisters sewn.
The iron Duke himself,—whose soldier fame
To England's proudest ship had given her name,
And whose white hairs in this my earliest scene
Had scarce more honour'd than accustom'd been,—
Was two years since to his last haven past :
I had seen his castle-flag to fall half-mast
One morn as I sat looking on the sea,
When thus all England's grief came first to me,
Who hold my childhood favour'd that I knew
So well the face that won at Waterloo.

A little later Mr. Bridges went to Eton. This was it may certainly be said, fortunate for Eton and fortunate for him—fortunate for him because Eton, whatever may be its failings, is certainly a good school for a poet, not only from its associations, its splendours, its delightful amenities, but still more from its free and varied life. It leaves them more alone, gives them more scope to be themselves, than many schools which are better for more average, ordinary boys. This may be seen in the Eton

poets, in Gray and Shelley, in Swinburne, and above all in Mr. Bridges.

It was fortunate for Eton, since none of her sons have written so happily about Eton and for Eton as he: none above all with such ideal truth to her real nature, to what she was meant to be.

Gray loved her, and in the formal eighteenth century he discerned and declared her historic tradition, her dedication to learning.

> Ye distant spires, ye antique towers
> That crown the watery glade,
> Where grateful Science still adores
> Her Henry's holy shade.

Swinburne loved her and has written of her beauty and her associations:

> Still the reaches of the river, still the light on field and hill,
> Still the memories held aloft as lamps for hope's young fire to fill,
> Shine, and while the light of England lives, shall shine for England still.

But Mr. Bridges has seen more deeply. Eton is too often thought of, as Oxford is also sometimes thought of, as a place of elegant education for elegant youth, for the *jeunesse dorée*, a smart and fashionable school where a good deal of cricket and rowing and other athletic enjoyment accompany the acquisition of a tincture of the classics, a knowledge of the manners and ways of society and 'all things fitting gentleman's attire'.

Mr. Bridges appreciated and enjoyed all this to the full, but he and his best friends found something more in the College of St. Mary the Virgin of Eton, the fair foundation of the royal and murdered saint.

I wonder whether any here know the Charter of the Foundation of Eton. It is headed by a beautiful illumina-

tion representing King Henry VI dedicating his college to her Patron.

An intimate friend of Mr. Bridges, Mr. Lionel Muirhead, when they had just left school and were at Oxford together, painted a picture representing more fully the same dedication, and containing symbolical portraits of the friends, Mr. Dolben, Mr. Stuckey Coles, and Mr. Bridges himself.

Mr. Bridges has most happily combined this inspiration and this view of Eton with her other aspects in the charming 'Eton Ode' written for the 'Ninth Jubilee of the College'. (Oxford edition, p. 313.)

Mr. Bridges has written again, more than once, about Eton, about his own life there, in the 'Eclogue for the Fourth of June', Oxford edition, p. 330, about her sorrow for her sons, in the 'Ode in memory of the Old-Etonians whose lives were lost in the South African War' (Oxford edition, p. 393).

The same spirit pervades them all. It was a spirit common to himself and his friends, as may be seen, not only from this painting of one of them, but from the faithful, vivid, and humorous picture which he has drawn of their little coterie in the memoir which he wrote for the edition of his friend Mr. Mackworth Dolben's poems.

At Eton Mr. Bridges was, as might be gathered from his poems, a scholar and an athlete in happy combination. It was the same when he came to Oxford.

He chose Corpus, of which college a kinsman of his, Dr. Thomas Edward Bridges, had been President for twenty-one years, dying the year before the Poet Laureate was born. He pursued the usual classical course, reading for 'Greats', and taking his degree with Honours in 1867.

He had originally intended to seek Holy Orders, and had come to Oxford with introductions to Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon, who remained his friends during his undergraduate time. He gave up this idea, however, and after his degree travelled with his friend Mr. Muirhead in the East. Later he travelled with this same companion on the Continent.

Mr. Muirhead has kindly given me in a letter some account of their travels. He writes :

'In January 1868 R. B. and I went by sea to Alexandria, and thence to Cairo, where after spending some time we went leisurely up the Nile, seeing everything we could, as far as Assouan, and did not return to Cairo till the beginning of May. R. B. wrote poems even in those days, and I find in my sketch-book a small pencil drawing of him smoking his pipe with the legend beneath: "R. B. as he appeared when he composed his ode." The ode is no longer in existence unless the Pyramids and the Nile with their "eternal recollections" (*vide* "Now in wintry delights") keep it in mind. I have also got a sketch of him writing in one of the temples at Phylae : the Nile has now drowned the temple, though Osiris has fortunately preserved the poet.

In May we went by Jaffa to Jerusalem where we spent several weeks seeing the surrounding country, the Dead Sea, and going south to Hebron. R. was then suddenly summoned to England and I continued my journeyings alone.

In March 1874 we went to Italy, seeing Pisa, Florence, Perugia, Siena, Orvieto, Rome, Naples, Pompeii, Paestum, Sorrento.

In November 1881 we went to Amiens, Turin, Genoa, Nervi, Rapallo, Spezzia, and to Florence and Rome in

1882. Thence R. went on to Sicily, leaving me in Rome. Some of the sonnets in the Growth of Love were written at Florence in 1882—"Life-trifling Lions", for instance, I *think* may be so dated—though a great number of the sonnets were written much earlier (the first edition of some of them was in 1876) and some of those dealing with Florence date from 1874; without much more research than I can give I should be afraid of venturing on dogmatic statement about dates.'

This travel widened his views and gave him in his own language :

Mirrors bright for the magic cave,

of memory. They gave him in particular a living idea of Greece and Egypt which no book learning alone can supply.

I note not a few reminiscences of them in his poem. One of the best instances may be found in a poem of which I am specially fond, 'Achilles in Scyros'. Let me quote one passage from this poem. It is about Achilles and Homer.

But lo, I am come to give thee joy, to call
Thee daughter, and prepare thee for the sight
Of such a lover, as no lady yet
Hath sat to await in chamber or in bower
On any wallèd hill or isle of Greece ;
Nor yet in Asian cities, whose dark queens
Look from the latticed casements over seas
Of hanging gardens ; nor doth all the world
Hold a memorial not where Ægypt mirrors
The great smile of her kings and sunsmit fanes
In timeless silence : none hath been like him ;
And all the giant stones, which men have piled
Upon the illustrious dead, shall crumble and join
The desert dust, ere his high dirging Muse
Be dispossessèd of the throne of song.

Among his contemporaries and friends at Oxford were Dr. Sanday, Mr. Andrew Lang, and Mr. Gerard Hopkins, a very interesting, poetic, pathetic figure, of whom he has written a brief memoir, to be found, as I have already mentioned, in the little volume, *Bridges to Kipling*.

As an oarsman Mr. Bridges achieved some remarkable successes, stroking the Corpus Eight and carrying it to the head of the river, while at Paris as stroke of the Oxford Etonians he, I believe, performed greater feats still, and I often find, when I ask his contemporaries what he was like, that it was in this capacity that he made the strongest impression on them.

I remember well that when I was getting up a list of supporters to nominate him for the Professorship of Poetry I found that Bishop Chavasse had been with him at Corpus, and with some hesitation I asked the Bishop if he would let me add his name. 'Most assuredly I will', he said. 'I steered the Eight for him at Corpus and I have the greatest respect and regard for him.'

The river may be said to stream like a shining thread through his poems, and the oarsman is a very frequent figure in them. In this he is a true son of Oxford.

ELEGY

Clear and gentle stream!
Known and loved so long,
That hast heard the song
And the idle dream
Of my boyish day;
While I once again
Down thy margin stray,
In the selfsame strain
Still my voice is spent,
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream!

Where my old seat was
Here again I sit,
Where the long boughs knit
Over stream and grass
A translucent eaves:
Where back eddies play
Shipwreck with the leaves,
And the proud swans stray,
Sailing one by one
Out of stream and sun,
And the fish lie cool
In their chosen pool.

Many an afternoon
Of the summer day
Dreaming here I lay;
And I know how soon,
Idly at its hour,
First the deep bell hums
From the minster tower,
And then evening comes,
Creeping up the glade,
With her lengthening shade,
And the tardy boon
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream!
Ere again I go
Where thou dost not flow,
Well does it beseem
Thee to hear again
Once my youthful song,
That familiar strain
Silent now so long:
Be as I content
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream.

This delightful little 'Elegy', as he calls it, which opens the book of the 'Shorter Poems', was one of the first of his writings, and appears in the earliest book of poems.

'There is a hill beside the silver Thames' (Oxford edition, p. 248) is again one of the most characteristic and beautiful of his pieces. Another poem a little later, characteristically headed 'Indolence' (Oxford edition, p. 270), describes a voyage by boat from Oxford to Abingdon.

When he came back from travel he determined to study medicine. He joined St. Bartholomew's Hospital and made himself thoroughly proficient.

He took the M.B. degree at Oxford, and in course of time held several hospital appointments. In particular he was on the staff at St. Bartholomew's and at the Children's Hospital in Great Ormonde Street. He also practised generally. He much preferred treating young children to treating adults, as he very wittily said, for two reasons, firstly that they could not tell him untruths about their symptoms, secondly because they were obliged to take the remedies which he prescribed for them.

He was moreover very fond of children. One of the most touching and beautiful poems in the whole of his collected works, arising, I believe, out of his hospital time, is the poem 'On a Dead Child' (Oxford edition, p. 267). I wonder how many here know it. I will venture, though it is not an easy poem to read, to read it.

On a Dead Child

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond ;
Startling my fancy fond
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it :
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking and stiff ;
Yet feels to my hand as if
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed !—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet ! doth the change content thee ?—Death, whither hath he taken thee ?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this ?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and awaken thee ?

Ah ! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and have heard of, fail us.

As a set-off to this sad poem let me read you another, a glad poem on a child. It is entitled ' The Garland of Rachel '.

The heroine was the little newly-born daughter of Mr. Henry Daniel, at that time Bursar, now Provost, of Worcester College. She was born on September 17, 1880. It was Mr. Humphry Ward who suggested the ' Garland ', after the model of the famous Guirlande de Julie of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and it was printed the next year.

There were eighteen contributors: (1) her father himself; (2) Mr. Albert Watson, afterwards Principal of B.N.C. (in Latin) ; (3) Mr. Austin Dobson ; (4) Andrew Lang ;

(5) John Addington Symonds; (6) Mr. Robert Bridges; (7) 'Lewis Carroll'; (8) Sir Richard Harington (Latin); (9) A. Mary F. Robinson, afterwards Madame Darmesteter; (10) Mr. Edmund Gosse; (11) Mr. Francis W. Bourdillon; (12) W. E. Henley (in French); (13) Mr. W. J. Courthope; (14) Frederick Locker; (15) Mr. Humphry Ward; (16) Mr. Ernest Myers; (17) Margaret L. Woods; (18) Mr. C. J. Cruttwell.

Mr. Daniel printed the slender volume. Mrs. Daniel added the floral lettering or 'miniation' in red ink. Mr. Alfred Parsons, R.A., then a young Somerset friend, contributed three designs, for head and tail pieces and for the tops of the pages.

Here is Mr. Bridges' poem:

'Rachel's Garland'

Press thy hands and crow,
Thou that know'st not joy:
Rouse thy voice and weep,
Thou that know'st not care:
Thou that toil'st not, sleep:
Wake and wail nor spare,
Spare not us, that know
Grief and life's annoy.

Thine unweeting cries
Passion's alphabet,
Labour, love, and strife
Spell, or e'er thou read:
But the book of life
Hard to learn indeed,
Babe, before thee lies
For thy reading yet.

Thou when thou hast known
Joy, will laugh not then:
When grief bids thee weep,
Thou wilt check thy tears:

When toil brings not sleep,
Thou, for others' fears
Fearful, shalt thine own
Lose and find again.

To-day the child for whom the garland was then twined, has a nursling of her own, and her poet wears the nation's laurel.

Another poem belonging to this period and phase I will not read. It is exceedingly clever and amusing, but it is in Latin, and I am not lecturing in Latin. It is entitled *Carmen Elegiacum Roberti Bridges de Nosocomio Sti. Bartholomaei Londinensi*, and is an account written in the 'longs and shorts' so dear to Eton, of that hospital and its staff. It is addressed to Dr. Patrick Black, and has a very neat and fluent Introduction dated from 52 Bedford Square, on the Ides of December, and a merry motto :

Si qua videbuntur casu non dicta latinè
In qua scribebam barbara terra fuit.

Indeed, the whole piece is full of a delightful playfulness. 'Dear to Eton,' I said, and Mr. Bridges himself writes :

Audeo quae quondam propter Thamesina fluenta
Progeniem docuit mater Etona suam.

It was published in 1877. It was exhibited at the Royal College of Physicians on St. Luke's Day last, when Dr. Bridges was entertained by the President and Fellows as the guest of the evening. Another production of his, one of the wisest and wittiest things of the kind I know, is not a poem at all, but that very prosy thing a Report ; an account in prose of the treatment, the gratuitous and necessarily rather perfunctory treatment, of the 'casualty' patients at a London Hospital.

Mr. Bridges became then a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. But as regards his poetry the most

important effect of this period of his career is the influence of his medical and scientific study upon his thought. He possesses and exhibits a grasp of Natural Science, so potent a factor in our time, such as will be found in no English poet before Tennyson, and in no other poet since Tennyson. Good specimens of it may be seen in the Hexameter Epistle to ' L. M. ' (his friend Mr. Lionel Muirhead), the first of the ' Poems in Classical Prosody ', (O.B. p. 411).

Fond as he was, however, of Science, and strong as was his belief in its importance, he loved poetry better, and became convinced that it was his vocation. This is shown in the ' Spring Ode ' (Oxford edition, p. 254) :

Thrice happy he, the rare
Prometheus, who can play
With hidden things, and lay
New realms of nature bare ;
Whose venturous step has trod
Hell underfoot, and won
A crown from man and God
For all that he has done.—

That highest gift of all,
Since crabbèd fate did flood
My heart with sluggish blood,
I look not mine to call ;
But, like a truant freed,
Fly to the woods, and claim
A pleasure for the deed
Of my inglorious name :

And am content, denied
The best, in choosing right ;
For Nature can delight
Fancies unoccupied
With ecstasies so sweet
As none can even guess,
Who walk not with the feet
Of joy in idleness.

And still more forcibly in Sonnet 62 in the 'Growth of Love' (Oxford edition, p. 213):

I will be what God made me, nor protest
Against the bent of genius in my time,
That science of my friends robs all the best,
While I love beauty, and was born to rhyme.
Be they our mighty men, and let me dwell
In shadow among the mighty shades of old,
With love's forsaken palace for my cell;
Whence I look forth and all the world behold,

And say, These better days, in best things worse,
This bastardy of time's magnificence,
Will mend in fashion and throw off the curse,
To crown new love with higher excellence.
Curs'd tho' I be to live my life alone,
My toil is for man's joy, his joy my own.

A very interesting autobiographic piece which describes this period of his life and his conflict of inclinations is the 'Recollections of Solitude' (Oxford edition, p. 367).

In the end it may be said of him that, 'he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision', for indeed, it was a 'call'. He chose poetry not from ambition but from love, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer. This is how that shy mistress ought to be wooed, and how she is to be won and wedded.

He has a beautiful little poem upon this theme (Oxford edition, pp. 286–7):

O Love, my muse, how was't for me
Among the best to dare,
In thy high courts that bowed the knee
With sacrifice and prayer?

Their mighty offerings at thy shrine
Shamed me, who nothing bore:
Their suits were mockeries of mine,
I sued for so much more.

Full many I met that crowned with bay
In triumph home returned,
And many a master on the way
Proud of the prize I scorned.

I wished no garland on my head
Nor treasure in my hand ;
My gift the longing that me led,
My prayer thy high command,

My love, my muse ; and when I spake
Thou mad'st me thine that day,
And more than hundred hearts could take
Gav'st me to bear away.

In 1882 then, at the age of 38, he gave up London and Medicine and retired to the country, and to Berkshire, in which county he has lived ever since. For a number of years he had his home at Yattendon, on the downs above Pangbourne. Now, to our advantage, he is settled near Boar's Hill.

His first volume of poems was published in 1873 when he was nine-and-twenty. It is now exceedingly rare, and so are the thin, paper-covered pamphlets which succeeded it during the next few years. Some of the poems contained in these he has never reprinted. There is one in particular, a very fine Lucretian piece on 'Nature', which I have often wished he would reprint.

In 1876 he published what must be regarded as one of the most characteristic of his works, the sequence of Sonnets entitled 'The Growth of Love'. As then given to the world it consisted of twenty-four numbers. In 1879, and again in 1880, he published volumes, entitled simply, 'Poems by the author of the Growth of Love'. Then in 1883, the year after he had left London, came a notable event in his literary career, the printing for the first time of one of his plays by his now intimate friend

Mr. Henry Daniel, the present Provost of Worcester College.

The history of the 'Daniel Press' is a chapter apart, a chapter of real moment, as is beginning to be more and more evident in the history of printing and poetry in our time. But it deserves, and would require, a separate lecture to do it justice.

The first long poem printed by Mr. Daniel for Mr. Bridges was the noble and beautiful play which opens the Oxford Book, *Prometheus the Fire-Giver*, 'A Mask in the Greek Manner', as he calls it. Both the Greek manner and the manner of Milton, especially of *Comus*, are distinctly traceable in it, as the first few lines alone would suffice to show. And yet it is thoroughly original. It reveals all Mr. Bridges' qualities. It revealed them, as I well remember, to me, for it was the first of his poems I read. It was reprinted in 1884 by Mr. Bell, and it was in this form that I came upon it. Just after it appeared I had asked my friend and predecessor in this Chair, Mr. J. W. Mackail, if there was any new poet who could write really good blank verse. He said, 'Yes, there is one', and advised me to get *Prometheus*. I got it and read it, and from that day I have never had any doubt that Mr. Bridges was a true and a *new* poet, a poet that is with a new and quite independent style of his own. This last point I think struck me as much as anything. His blank verse is not like that of Tennyson except when Tennyson also resembles Milton, nor like that of Swinburne or Shelley or Keats. In *Prometheus* it is obviously reminiscent of Milton, but it has a *differentia* of its own.

I set myself to procure everything of this new and delectable poet, and, very soon after, I had the good luck to make his personal acquaintance. For the next half-dozen years he went on in his quiet, sequestered way,

printing and publishing his poems and plays, now with his friend Mr. Daniel, now with Messrs. Bell, now with Mr. Edward Bumpus, the plays chiefly with the latter.[3]

He was not well known, but he had his poetic friends, and other good judges spoke up for him from time to time. Notably Mr. Andrew Lang, in his *Letters on Literature*, 1889, quoted and praised, with equally happy discrimination and warmth, several of his pieces, above all the 'Elegy on the Lady killed by grief for the death of her betrothed' (Oxford edition, p. 238).

It is interesting to read Lang's criticism again today, written in 1889, nearly a quarter of a century ago, before Browning had published his last volume, or Tennyson his last but one.

'The name of Mr. Robert Bridges', he says, 'is probably strange to many lovers of poetry who would like nothing better than to make acquaintance with his verse. But his verse is not so easily found. This poet never writes in magazines; his books have not appealed to the public by any sort of advertisement, only two or three of them have come forth in the regular way. The first was "Poems, by Robert Bridges, Batchelor of Arts in the University of Oxford. *Parva seges satis est.* London: Pickering, 1873".

This volume was presently, I fancy, withdrawn, and the author has distributed some portions of it in succeeding pamphlets, or in books printed at Mr. Daniel's private press in Oxford. In these, as in all Mr. Bridges' poems, there is a certain austere and indifferent beauty of diction, and a memory of the old English poets, Milton and the earlier lyrists. I remember being greatly pleased with the "Elegy on a Lady whom Grief for the Death of Her Betrothed Killed".

Let the priests go before, arrayed in white,
And let the dark-stoled minstrels follow slow,
Next they that bear her, honoured on this night,
And then the maidens in a double row,
Each singing soft and low,
And each on high a torch upstaying :
Unto her lover lead her forth with light,
With music, and with singing, and with praying.

This is a stately stanza.

In his first volume Mr. Bridges offered a few rondeaux and triolets, turning his back on all these things as soon as they became popular. In spite of their popularity, I have the audacity to like them still, in their humble twittering way. Much more in his true vein were the lines, " Clear and Gentle Stream ", and all the other verses in which, like a true Etonian, he celebrates the beautiful Thames (Oxford edition, p. 248) :

There is a hill beside the silver Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine :
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.
Straight trees in every place
Their thick tops interlace,
And pendant branches trail their foliage fine
Upon his watery face.
. . . . . .
A rushy island guards the sacred bower,
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,
Robbing the golden market of the bees :
And laden barges float
By banks of myosote ;
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys
Delay the loitering boat.

I cannot say how often I have read that poem, and how delightfully it carries the breath of our river through the London smoke. Nor less welcome are the two poems

on spring, the " Invitation to the Country ", and the " Reply " (Oxford edition, pp. 252–7).'

Professor Dowden also in the *Fortnightly*, and Mr. Humphry Ward and Mr. Thursfield in the *Times* spoke up for him.

It was about 1890 that he began to take his real rank. In 1889 Mr. Daniel reprinted for him the 'Growth of Love', now increased to seventy-four sonnets, while he published four plays, *Palicio*, *The Return of Ulysses*, *The Christian Captives*, and *Achilles in Scyros*, with Bumpus and with Messrs. Bell, the first edition of the collection called the 'Shorter Poems'. It was this little volume that made him more widely known. A reprint was called for the same year, and two more in 1891 and 1894. Its further history will be found on page 224 of the Oxford edition.

In the year 1891 it was that Mr. Alfred Miles, had the courage and prescience to entitle his new volume 'Robert Bridges and Contemporary Poets'.

In 1898 Canon R. W. Dixon, his old friend, wrote a most discerning and emphatic commendation of him for a series of portraits by Will Rothenstein, of which more anon.

In 1899 Messrs. Bell issued a shilling edition of the 'Shorter Poems', to which a fifth book had been added in 1894, and this was again reprinted the same year.

This same year, 1899, saw the publication by a new firm, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., of a collected edition of all his works in six volumes.[4] This is a very attractive edition. It contains the so-called 'New Poems' and the plays, and has a number of notes on the history of the poems.

In 1903 he made another new departure, publishing with Mr. Daniel the first of the 'Poems in Classical

Prosody ' which grew out of the theories and experiments of his friend, the Radley Master, Mr. William Johnson Stone. ' Will Stone's versification ', as he calls it in the first of the poems so written and published, the first, that is, of the Epistles.

In 1912, last year, Oxford gave him the degree of Doctor of Letters ; and in the autumn the University Press, to its lasting credit, ranked him living with the dead immortals,—οἵῳ πεπνῦσθαι, τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουσιν—and put him into the series of Oxford Poets, in the volume which I hold in my hand, and am using to-day. It was a bold step, but it has been abundantly justified.

This edition adds to the poems collected before a series of so-called ' Later Poems ' which, as will be seen, have appeared in a variety of periodicals and papers, ranging from the *Sheaf* and the Corpus College *Pelican* to the *Monthly* and *English* Reviews.

Last July he was appointed Poet Laureate, and when at the end of the month I asked for a copy of the cheap edition, I was told it was all sold out.

There are then seven years which are landmarks in the Poet Laureate's poetical career, namely, 1873, 1883, 1890, 1899, 1903, 1912, and 1913.

Besides his verse, he has also written a good deal of criticism in prose, some avowed and some anonymous. Specially noteworthy are the criticisms of Keats which he wrote as an Introduction to Mr. Bullen's edition, his prose tractate on *Milton's Prosody* (published with the Clarendon Press in 1893), and his recent deliverance on *English Pronunciation* issued from the same source. These should be remembered by any one who wishes to study his poetry with thoroughness, and to understand his art and its development completely.

But I want now to let these poems speak for themselves,

and to give, through them, and in his own language, some indication of the character of his genius and his work.

Has it any dominant note? I think it has. 'Tis Love, Love, Love,' says the old French *refrain*, 'that makes the world go round.' C'est l'Amour qui fait le monde à la ronde. That is the secret of all life. And this is certainly Mr. Bridges' creed. But love implies an object, it is of many kinds, love of husband, wife, child, and friend, of man in general, of beauty in man's work, in all the various arts, of the fair face of nature, and containing and crowning all these, the love of God.

Mr. Bridges has put his creed into one of the shorter of the 'Shorter Poems', No. 9 of Book IV, a little poem that has all his art yet all his naturalness, his sincerity and artistic simplicity (Oxford edition, p. 286):

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddës grace:
No other care nor hope is mine;
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis namèd when God's name is said,
'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.

'Every gentle heart.' *Amore e cor gentil son una cosa* as the great Italian lover-poet sang. 'Love and the gentle heart are one same thing.' Mr. Bridges has had above all, and always, the 'chivalrous heart'.

The next two poems 'run division', as the old phrase was, on the same theme. Number 10 shows us how by following truly his true love of beauty he won the unique

reward of the sincere, who are faithful to their love and themselves. His ambition was to succeed in Science, his vocation was to succeed in poetry. He followed his vocation.

> I wished no garland on my head
> Nor treasure in my hand.

The garland is on his head now and I hope some treasure in the hand, but just because he did not seek them they were added to him.

Love is the theme of his two longer poems—'The Growth of Love' and 'Eros and Psyche', which takes the old fairy tale of True Love and the Soul, from Apuleius' tinsel setting, and gives of it a new, a healthy and heavenly reading.

> The poet in a golden clime was born,
> With golden stars above.
> Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love.

So wrote another Poet Laureate in his youth some eighty years ago.

How does the Poet Laureate of to-day put it? (Oxford edition, p. 303):

> Since to be loved endures,
> To love is wise:
> Earth hath no good but yours,
> Brave, joyful eyes.
>
> Earth hath no sin but thine,
> Dull eye of scorn:
> O'er thee the sun doth pine
> And angels mourn.

The counterpart of joy is sorrow, and the measure of love is grief. This too is worthily expressed in Mr. Bridges' poems. One of the most touching of them

all is the poem on the death of his wife's brother, Maurice Waterhouse (Oxford edition, p. 309):

I never shall love the snow again
Since Maurice died:
With corniced drift it blocked the lane,
And sheeted in a desolate plain
The country side.

The trees with silvery rime bedight
Their branches bare.
By day no sun appeared; by night
The hidden moon shed thievish light
In the misty air.

We fed the birds that flew around
In flocks to be fed:
No shelter in holly or brake they found.
The speckled thrush on the frozen ground
Lay frozen and dead.

We skated on stream and pond; we cut
The crinching snow
To Doric temple or Arctic hut;
We laughed and sang at nightfall, shut
By the fireside glow.

Yet grudged we our keen delights before
Maurice should come
We said, In-door or out-of-door
We shall love life for a month or more,
When he is home.

They brought him home; 'twas two days late
For Christmas day:
Wrapped in white, in solemn state,
A flower in his hand, all still and straight
Our Maurice lay.

And two days ere the year outgave
We laid him low.
The best of us truly were not brave,
When we laid Maurice down in his grave
Under the snow.

Perfect mastery of his instrument, delicate dainty harmony and rhythm, these will be found everywhere. Like a consummate skater or dancer, there is nothing he cannot do, no figure he cannot cut, no step he cannot execute, and with grace. 'But', they say, 'he is wanting in passion and in feeling for the common joys and sorrows of life.' The little poem 'A Villager' is surely enough to refute that charge (Oxford edition, p. 319):

There was no lad handsomer than Willie was
The day that he came to father's house:
There was none had an eye as soft an' blue
As Willie's was, when he came to woo.

To a labouring life though bound thee be,
An' I on my father's ground live free,
I'll take thee, I said, for thy manly grace,
Thy gentle voice an' thy loving face.

'Tis forty years now since we were wed:
We are ailing an' grey needs not to be said:
But Willie's eye is as blue an' soft
As the day when he wooed me in father's croft.

Yet changed am I in body an' mind,
For Willie to me has ne'er been kind:
Merrily drinking an' singing with the men
He 'ud come home late six nights o' the se'n.

An' since the children be grown an' gone
He 'as shunned the house an' left me lone:
An' less an' less he brings me in
Of the little he now has strength to win.

The roof lets through the wind an' the wet,
An' master won't mend it with us in 's debt:
An' all looks every day more worn,
An' the best of my gowns be shabby an' torn.

No wonder if words hav' a-grown to blows ;
That matters not while nobody knows :
For love him I shall to the end of life,
An' be, as I swore, his own true wife.

An' when I am gone, he'll turn, an' see
His folly an' wrong, an' be sorry for me :
An' come to me there in the land o' bliss
To give me the love I looked for in this.

Love of his country will be found in the ' Fair Brass ' (Oxford edition, p. 349), a delightful quietly original and very characteristic lyric, on a subject so apt that it seems strange it has never been handled before, and in the Peace Ode (Oxford edition, p. 439).

It remains to speak of two points which go together, of Mr. Bridges' knowledge and skill in music, and of his command of that rare and difficult art, the art of writing hymns.

My own knowledge of music is slight. I only know enough to believe that I can see for myself, what others tell me, that Mr. Bridges' knowledge is deep and true. His love of it certainly breaks out again and again in his poems. He has written an Ode to Music for the Bicentenary Commemoration of Henry Purcell (Oxford edition, p. 394). He dedicated ' Eros and Psyche ' to the celestial spirit ' of the same rare English composer. In the ' Christian Captives ' he introduces the music of *Anerio* and *Allegri*, and he writes charmingly about music in the sonnet to Joseph Joachim, and critically about it, in the first Epistle in Classical Prosody (Oxford edition, p. 411).

Of his hymns it is hardly possible to give a fair idea in a short time, or by one or two specimens. He excels both in translation and in original work. I first came across a hymn of his, a translation from the Latin, in that very

pleasant book *Translations from Prudentius*, edited by his friend the Rev. Francis St. John Thackeray, the 'Morning Hymn'. I was at once attracted by it and I have always, when I have returned to it, thought it very beautiful. It is, however, somewhat long, and I will only quote the first two stanzas :

Nox et tenebrae, et nubila
Confusa mundi, et turbida,
Lux intrat, albescit polus,
Christus venit, discedite!

Caligo terrae scinditur
Percussa solis spiculo
Rebusque jam color redit
Vultu nitentis sideris.

Night and gloom and cloud
The world's confusion and shroud!
Light enters, the sky grows bright,
Christ comes, take ye your flight.

The darkness of earth is torn
By the level spears of the morn,
The colours return and play
In the smile of the star of day.

In 1899 he published a Hymn Book of his own, *The Yattendon Hymnal*, a most original volume based on his own personal experiment and experience with his rustic choir in his parish church on the Berkshire Downs. It is described as 'Hymns in Four Parts with English Words for singing in Church, edited by Robert Bridges'. In the preface he makes acknowledgement to his friend Mr. Henry Ellis Wooldridge, some time the Slade Professor of Fine Art, for the music. It was published in various forms. The *Edition de Luxe*, at a guinea a part, is a magnificent volume, so is the next largest form, but there are also quite cheap editions procurable at a very

small price, from Messrs. Blackwell. I will quote one Hymn from this book, No. 82 :

My heart is fill'd with longing
And thick the thoughts come thronging
  Of my eternal home ;
That all desire fulfilleth
And woe and terror stilleth :
Ah, thither fain, thither fain would I come.

Creation knows no staying,
And with the world decaying
  May love itself decay :
Yea, as the earth grows older
Her grace and beauty moulder,
Her joy of life passeth, passeth away.

But Thou, O Love supremest,
Who man from woe redeemest,
  My Maker, Thee I pray,
My soul with night surrounded,
Above the abyss unsounded,
Lead forth to light, lead to Thy heavenly day.

I said at the beginning of this Lecture that I would not myself praise or appraise my friend, but I do not feel precluded from quoting the appreciation of another. Let me conclude by reviving an appreciation written some sixteen years ago. It is that of Mr. Richard Watson Dixon. It will be found in the letter-press of a volume entitled *English Portraits*, by Will Rothenstein, published in 1898, opposite a portrait of Mr. Bridges himself.

' Among "them that know" ', the writer there says, ' there is continual wonder that wider recognition is not given to the genius of Robert Bridges. His generation hesitates to place him where in heart it feels that he ought to be placed : but the reason for not doing a thing should scarcely be that it ought to be done. The living

generation ought to give the signal to posterity. One or two fair opportunities have been lamentably lost. . . .

. . . . . .

One of his dramas contains the most ludicrous situation ever invented, another the most pathetic. His sonnets are a collection that will stand among the first three or four, unless his generation befool posterity by its reticence. His Shorter Poems are as new an application to nature as photography. To poetry as an art he has rendered a special service. The influence of his "new prosody" is apparent everywhere. We know of Milton and of Keats what we should not have known without him. It is perhaps a pity that the masters so seldom write on one another. If Milton had written on Shakespeare we should have known things that we shall never know.' . . .

The whole is to my mind an excellent piece of English and an admirable piece of criticism. The author was the lifelong friend of William Morris and of Burne-Jones. He was an excellent and approved writer himself. 'Among them that know', to use his own phrase, he is accounted, I believe, one of the best of our Church historians, and he was also himself a poet. If you would know more of him let me commend to you the two little volumes, *Selected Poems by R. W. Dixon, with a Memoir by Robert Bridges*, Smith, Elder, and the *Last Poems of Richard Watson Dixon, selected and edited by Robert Bridges*, Henry Frowde, 1905.

Dixon was a warm friend of Mr. Bridges. Make allowance for that friendship if you will, as I have asked you to do for mine. He put his opinions strongly. I told him at the time, I remember, how much the strength and courage of his words pleased me. He said that he

had not written when he had the chance without deliberation.

Yet friendship is not all a disadvantage to the critic. Is not the deepest truth about a poet that spoken by a poet ?

> And you must love him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love.

If only he could have been spared to know that Bridges' generation has not ' befooled posterity by its reticence ', that ' the living have given the signal '. If Dixon could have lived to see this day !

[1] This fact is stated in an interesting letter of Gray to Walpole. He is criticizing, and I fear correcting, the book of an Oxford professor of poetry, Spence's *Polymetis*, and he says :

' There are several little neglects, that one might have told him of, which I noted in reading it hastily : on page 311 a discourse about orange trees occasioned by Virgil's *Inter odoratum lauri nemus*, where he fancies the Roman *Laurus* to be our Laurel, though undoubtedly the bay tree, which is *odoratum*, and (I believe) still called *Lauro*, or *Alloro*, at Rome.'

[2] Another critique of mine appeared in the *Literary Year Book* for 1900.

[3] He published *Eros and Psyche*, Bell, 1885. *Nero*, Bumpus, 1885. *The Feast of Bacchus*, Daniel, 1889. *Elements of Milton's Blank Verse*, in Mr. Beeching's edition, 1887. *Prosody of Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1889.

[4] A seventh volume is understood to be now in preparation which will complete this edition up to date.

' ROBERT BRIDGES '

(Reprinted from *The Oxford Magazine.*)

LOVING the joy of earth, and well belovéd,
Home at the last he is come :
Home to the light of applause he has not sought for,
Now, with the wreath of a fame he never wrought for,
England rewards her son.

The meadow-sweet, and streamlets of the Isis,
Have had their poet long,
And the greater themes of high Hellenic story
He has touched again with a tender, mellowing glory,
Master of Attic song.

O eagle-eyed, knowing the lofty music
That Milton also knew,
To-day the heart of the land with thee rejoices,
Hearing, far from the murmur of city voices
Thy magic known to few.

H. F. B. B.-S.

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